This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

SH 336/30

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

(*DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO THE KING.*)

CONSTABLE'S MISCELLANY,

VOLS. L. & LI.

On the 26th December 1829, and 2d January 1830, will appear,

HISTORY

OF

CHIVALRY AND THE CRUSADES.

BY

THE REV. HENRY STEBBING, M.A.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

EDINBURGH:

CONSTABLE AND CO. 19, WATERLOO PLACE;

AND HURST, CHANCE, AND CO. LONDON.

59

ORIGINAL WORKS

PREPARING FOR

CONSTABLE'S MISCELLANY.

I. LIFE of SIR WILLIAM WALLACE of ELDERSLIE, with the History of his Struggle for the Independence of Scotland, including Biographical Notices of contemporay English and Scottish Warriors. By JOHN D. CARRICK, Esq. 2 vols.

II. HISTORY of MUSIC, ANCIENT and MODERN. By W. COOKE STAFFORD, Esq. 1 vol.

III. LIFE of KING JAMES the FIRST. By ROBERT CHAMBERS, Author of "The Rebellions in Scotland," &c. &c. 2 vols.

IV. The ACHIEVEMENTS of the KNIGHTS of MALTA, from the Institution of the Hospitallers of St John, in 1099, till the Political Extinction of the Order, by Napoleon, in 1800. By ALEX. SUTHERLAND, Esq. 2 vols.

V. HISTORY of FRANCE, from the earliest authentic era till the present time. By WM. FRASER, Esq. 3 vols.

VI. A TOUR in SICILY, &c, By J. S. MEMES, Esq., LL.D., Author of the "History of Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture," &c. 1 vol.

VII. LIFE of FRANCIS PIZARRO, and an ACCOUNT of the CONQUEST of PERU, &c. By the the Author of the "Life of Hernan Cortes." 1 vol.

VIII. LIFE and REIGN of MAHMOUD II., present Grand Sultan of Turkey, including the Geographical, Moral, and Political History of that Empire. By EDWARD UPHAM, Esq., Author of the "History of the Ottoman Empire, &c. 1 vol.

IX. The POEMS and LETTERS of ROBERT BURNS, Chronologically arranged, with a Preliminary Essay and Notes, and sundry Additions. By J. G. LOCKHART, LL.B. 2 vols.

LIFE OF [illegible]

[illegible]

1629.

[illegible]

CONSTABLE'S MISCELLANY
OF
Original and Selected Publications
IN THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS
— OF —
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, & THE ARTS.
VOL. XLIX.

LIFE OF HERNAN CORTES.

Drawn by D. O. Hill — Engraved by J. West

MONTEZUMA SHOWS CORTES HIS IDOLS.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR CONSTABLE & Co. EDINBURGH:
AND HURST, CHANCE & Co. LONDON.
1829.

~~2382.121~~

SA 3361.30

Gift of
Francis A. Marden,
New York,
23 March, 1887.

LIFE

OF

HERNAN CORTES.

BY

DON TELESFORO DE TRUEBA Y COSIO.

AUTHOR OF

"GOMEZ ARIAS," "THE CASTILIANS," &c.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR CONSTABLE AND CO.;

AND HURST, CHANCE, AND CO. LONDON.

1829.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK, CANONGATE.

TO THE READER.

When I resolved to write the following history, I was sensible that prejudice might offer two objections against the undertaking. The circumstance of my being a Spaniard, rendered me liable to be considered partial towards the conquerors of Mexico, and my character as a Novelist, would naturally suggest the probability of my roving too freely over the field of imagination.

Against these two objections, it has been my zealous endeavour to provide. When bestowing any great praise on Hernan Cortes and his companions, I have quoted the words of Dr Robertson; and to remove the second objection, I have been careful to set down my authority for every event of the least

importance. The number and respectability of my references, will show my anxiety on this point. If, after this assertion, any redundancy of fancy is still found, this will certainly be in the form, but not in the substance, of the work. I have been extremely scrupulous with regard to facts; and for the rest, I humbly hope no one will blame me for not having written the extraordinary and romantic deeds of Hernan Cortes in the style and manner of a Bulletin or Gazette.

TELESFORO DE TRUEBA Y COSIO.

London, Nov. 30, 1829.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

INTRODUCTION, ... 11

CHAP. I.
Birth, Education, and Youth of Hernan Cortes, 29

CHAP. II.
Conquest of the Island of Cuba, . . 39

CHAP. III.
Expedition for the Conquest of New Spain, . 50

CHAP. IV.
The Expedition touches at the Island of Cozumel, and arrives at Tabasco, . . . 61

CHAP. V.
Interview with the Messengers of Montezuma, &c. 72

CHAP. VI.
First Settlement of the Spaniards in New Spain, 85

CHAP. VII.
Submission of the Natives of Chempoalla, . 97

CHAP. VIII.
Cortes destroys his Fleet, and resumes his March, 108

CHAP. IX.
Account of the War with the Tlascalans, . 119

CHAP. X.
Conspiracy and Massacre of the Cholulans, . 133

CHAP. XI.
Cortes continues his March, and enters Mexico, 147

CHAP. XII.
Description of the Mexican Capital, &c. . 160

CHAP. XIII. PAGE.
The Spaniards seize Montezuma, . . 168

CHAP. XIV.
Execution of the Mexican General, and Humiliation of Montezuma, ... 182

CHAP. XV.
Account of the Expedition of Pamphilo de Narvaez, 197

CHAP. XVI.
Insurrection of the Mexicans, and its Effects, . 218

CHAP. XVII.
Death of Montezuma, and Conflict in the Temple, 234

CHAP. XVIII.
Retreat from Mexico, and Battle of Otompan, . 245

CHAP. XIX.
Events previous to the Siege of Mexico, . 260

CHAP. XX.
The Spaniards leave Tlascala, and Hostilities recommence, ... 268

CHAP. XXI.
Conspiracy against Cortes, and last Arrangements for the Siege, ... 279

CHAP. XXII.
Prosecution of the Siege. Defeat of the Spaniards, 289

CHAP. XXIII.
Capture of Guatimozin and Reduction of Mexico, 300

CHAP. XXIV.
Proceedings after the Conquest of Mexico, . 312

CHAP. XXV.
Expedition of Cortes to Honduras, and Voyage to Spain, ... 324

CHAP. XXVI.
Second Voyage of Cortes to Spain. His Death and Character, ... 335

INTRODUCTION.

THE discovery and conquest of America form one of the most splendid episodes in the history of the world. The importance of so gigantic an event, and the wild excitement which it awoke, naturally made the conquerors and first historians of those vast regions array their descriptions in the glittering dress of romance, rather than in the sober garb of strict veracity. Hence we find accounts of the civilisation of some districts in America, which it is difficult to reconcile with the rude state and barbarous deeds of the inhabitants. This anomaly is more particularly displayed in the country of Anahuac, known afterwards by the name of New Spain. Some historians have given such pompous narratives concerning the advancement of the natives of Anahuac, and more especially the Mexicans, in the career of civilized life, that they have altogether bestowed the honours of

polished nations on a people which was immeasurably far from deserving the distinction. The Mexicans, indeed, when compared with the other inhabitants of the New World, exhibited a decided and even striking superiority; yet this advantage over the rest of the Indians could not entitle the possessors to that praise which their conquerors have bestowed on them, some in their love for the marvellous and romantic, and others, no doubt, to enhance the glory and difficulty of their own achievements.

The history of the first inhabitants of Anahuac is involved in that dense obscurity which baffles the most plausible reasonings, and overturns the most ingenious theories. Tradition is a very imperfect source of imformation; and the Mexican paintings, of which so much has been spoken, are neither sufficient in number, nor clear enough in their meaning, to lead to a philosophical elucidation of truth. Some writers, relying on the legends of the natives, and the discovery of prodigious bones and skulls in various parts of the country, have established the supposition that New Spain was originally inhabited by giants. But abandoning this fanciful theory to the speculations of the curious, it may perhaps be asserted with some probability of truth, that the Toltecas, a wandering tribe of savages, were the first who formed themselves

into any thing resembling a regular state. The Toltecas established a kingdom about the year 667. This monarchy lasted four centuries, when it was succeeded by the reign of the Chichemecas and other tribes, until part of the country was occupied by the Astecas or Mexicans, who, proceeding from the borders of the Gulf of California, settled about the lake of Tezcuco, and founded the famous city of Mexico.

The new occupants of the land introduced a more polished order of things, and they had made some progress in the pursuits of life at the time of the Spanish invasion. Yet the duration of the Mexican empire was very short, according to the accounts afforded by the natives. Little more than three centuries do they reckon from the first migration of their ancestors, and about half of that time since the establishment of their monarchy. This period was filled up by the government of nine sovereigns, of which the unfortunate Montezuma was the last. As so short a space of time seems incompatible with the degree of civilisation ascribed to the Mexicans, a presumption may safely be admitted, that much exaggeration has been used in the descriptions of their manners, arts, and regulations. But however remote the natives of the land might be with reference to the civilisation of their conquerors, it is not less true that the Mexicans

were greatly superior to all the other inhabitants of the New World. The right of private property, so ill understood, and so grossly violated, among rude and savage tribes, was respected and defined in the Mexican Empire. From the right of possession arose that of barter and exchange, and hence sprung various of the more simple operations of commerce.

But another striking feature in the country was the great number of its cities, and the vastness and beauty for which they were conspicuous. Some progress in the arts of social life must be made before men can found and organize such places as Cholula, Tacuba, and other great towns, are depicted to have been; yet a considerable deduction must be made from the florid descriptions of the conquerors, who, accustomed till then to meet with rude hordes of savages in America, were naturally struck and amazed when, on entering New Spain, they perceived so decided an improvement in civilisation. They found men inhabiting large cities, subject to regular laws, and following pursuits indicative of social life. They, moreover, were pleasingly surprised at the riches of the country, and the fertility of its soil; and their own vivid imaginations heightening the effect produced by external objects, it is perfectly natural that they should have conceived and represented

things in a light above that to which they were really entitled. But a rapid account of the religion, government, and manners of the Mexicans, will more justly decide the degree of civilisation to which they may have had undoubted claims.

In examining the religion of the Mexicans, we are struck with horror and amazement. Nothing can be conceived more barbarous and sanguinary than the ceremonies by which their gloomy superstition hoped to propitiate a bloodthirsty mythology. But the atrocity of human sacrifices, so prevalent in the Mexican empire, was doubly enhanced by the regular system into which religious rites were conducted. They had magnificent temples and other places consecrated to the service of the deities. The number of priests was very great, and they enjoyed high distinction in the state, as well as extraordinary weight in its councils. Yet a considerable difference existed between them, both with respect to their rank, and the various offices to which they were dedicated. There were several orders among the ministers of religion, at the head of which were two high priests,—a dignity which, as it was the most honourable and important in the state, was only conferred on those whose birth, integrity, and knowledge, rendered them worthy of such a

charge. The high priests were the first personages in the empire; the monarch invariably consulted them in all matters of moment, and no war was ever undertaken without their approbation. After the first two principal religious dignitaries, the other priests enjoyed certain degrees and gradations, strictly defined and understood. Some were sacrificers, others diviners; some had the care of the sanctuaries committed to them, while others were to compose the hymns and pious songs, and order every thing relating to the festivals.

Indeed, a considerable portion of their time was devoted by the Mexicans to the practice of religious ceremonies, and celebration of their festivals. Nor is this strange. Their mythological rites were strictly connected with those occupations which were most congenial to their character. The Mexicans were naturally warlike and ferocious, and accordingly the first of their gods was the god of war, called *Huitzilopochtli*. To this divinity they paid special worship; and nothing could exceed the disgusting atrocity of the sacrifices continually made to this terrific idol. The most rigid and frightful courses of penance were undergone by the fanatic Mexicans, in order to propitiate this cruel deity; severe fasts and corporeal macerations, and every torment which superstition can sug-

gest, were cheerfully undertaken in honour of *Huitzilopochtli*. Yet, lamentable as this ignorance might be, it was lenient in its effects when compared to the inhuman butcheries that daily stained the altars and the temples. The precise number of victims that were annually sacrificed cannot be ascertained, but, according to the most moderate computation, they amounted to no less than twenty thousand. The manner in which the sacrifices were conducted was, if possible, more atrocious than their extent. The mode of inflicting death varied according to the occasion of the festival, or the quality of the victim. In some cases the sufferers were drowned; in others, they were left to perish with hunger, shut up in dismal caverns on the mountains. The gladiatorial sacrifice, which was considered the most honourable, and in which the victim had a chance of escape by vanquishing his antagonist, was in many instances resorted to; but the most ordinary manner of performing the cruel ceremony was by opening the breast of the victim.

For the performance of this horrid function six priests were appointed, the principal of which, the *Topiltzin*, clothed himself in a red habit, fringed with cotton, and wearing a crown of green and yellow feathers on his head. The other five attendant priests were dressed in

white embroidered with black. These ministers dragged the victim, in a state of complete nudity, to the upper area of the temple, and extended him on the altar; four priests held the legs and arms, whilst the fifth kept the head tight with a wooden instrument resembling a serpent. The *Topiltzin* then came forward, and, with a knife made of flint, laid the breast open, and tearing out the heart, offered it, whilst yet palpitating, to the god, and then threw it at his feet. When the idol was of gigantic dimensions, it was customary to introduce the bleeding heart into its mouth with a large golden spoon. In most cases, also, the lips of the idol, and cornices of the entrance of the sanctuary, were anointed with the blood of the victim; and when he happened to be a prisoner of war, as soon as the sacrifice was consummated, the head was severed, to preserve the skull, and the rest of the body cast down to the lower area of the temple, where it was claimed by the warrior to whom it belonged by right of capture; and who then carried off his prize to be boiled and dressed, in order to entertain his family and friends. The Otomies used to cut the bodies in pieces, and sold them in the market.

It would be unseasonable here to detail the various other modes of performing sacrifices; enough has been said to demonstrate, that a

mythology so barbarous and abominable could not but be accompanied with every outward form of terror and gloom. Most of the Mexican deities were of a malignant nature, and only to be propitiated by blood. Hence we find them represented under forms and emblems the most fearful and repugnant. Gigantic monsters, and images in which ingenuity had exhausted its stores of horror, were the objects to which the Mexicans addressed their adoration, whilst their temples were always decorated with the figures of serpents, tigers, and other destructive animals. The gods being cruel and vindictive, the genius of the Mexican religion was necessarily dark and horrible. Fear became the principle of action; and by calling the most ungenerous feelings of human nature into play, sympathy was destroyed, and all the nicer touches of social life entirely annihilated. Thus by a strange anomaly, we find that the Mexicans, the people of the New World who had made the greatest progress in civilisation, were, in many cases, the most ferocious of the Indians, whilst their cruelty, in many of their ceremonies and manners, surpassed even that of the rude savage.

In the science of government, the Mexicans had made some progress at the time of their conquest by the Spaniards. However rude and

imperfect they might be in this respect in more remote periods, it is no less certain, that when Cortes subjected those vast territories to the Spanish crown, he found such rules and regulations in them as to excite his surprise and admiration. After making due allowances for the florid descriptions of the early historians, we shall still find much to approve in their system of administration. They had a regular police, established in so skilful a manner, as to have betokened an order of things superior to the then state of the Mexican empire. The institution of couriers, who transmitted intelligence with astonishing rapidity, and the number of civil offices appointed to inspect the public market, to collect the taxes, and to preserve order and justice among the buyers and sellers, afford decided evidence of great improvement from savage life. A sense of equity was evident in the manner of collecting taxes. These were laid on landed property, on the productions of industry, and on the various articles exposed to sale. But the exacting of these duties was not arbitrary: there were certain rules to be observed, and the quota assessed on each proprietor, merchant, or otherwise, was in strict proportion to the extent of his possessions, or the value of his acquisitions. Each one knew how much he had to contribute to the public revenue, and might resist

any undue extortion. As the Mexicans were not acquainted with the use of money, the taxes were paid in kind, and by this means the large public magazines or storehouses were filled, not only with the natural produce of all the provinces, but with every specimen in works of art and industry. From these magazines the Emperor supplied his numerous attendants in peace, and his armies in war, with the various necessaries of life, as well as the requisite arms and accoutrements.

The government of the Mexicans was a monarchy, but the degree of power and authority of their kings had been different in the various stages of their existence. In the infancy of their nation, great limits were put to the royal authority, and the power which the sovereign exercised at that period resembled more a patriarchal government, than a despotic rule. But with the increase of territory, the accumulation of riches, and the advancement in the refinements of life, the power of the kings was also augmented. Their pride induced them gradually to trespass the limits assigned to their authority, until, during the reign of Montezuma, and at the time of the Spanish invasion, the sovereign was absolute and despotic. The conquests and abilities of the last Mexican monarch, at the same time that they extended the dominions of

the empire, gave a mortal blow to the independence of those various sovereign princes who had their territories contiguous to his own. Such were the kings or lords of Tezcuco, Iztapalapan, and Tacuba, who, though exercising unlimited power over their own subjects, had nevertheless in the end been rendered feudatory to Montezuma. The crown of the Mexican empire was elective: to effect a competent choice, four lords of the highest rank, courage, and merit, were appointed in the beginning of the monarchy to this important function; but the electors themselves were removed, and others chosen to fill their places at every new election. In the election of a king, no attention whatever was paid to primogeniture; and this was exemplified at the death of Montezuma the First, when Axajacatl, his third son, was preferred to the elder brothers.

Several conditions were to be fulfilled, and many ceremonies performed, at each new coronation of a king. But the most characteristic, perhaps, was the obligation under which the new-elected sovereign lay, of going to war, that he might procure the victims to be sacrificed on so important an occasion. The Mexican court was formed upon a scale so systematic and magnificent, as to argue much civilisation in this respect, however deficient that nation might ap-

pear in others. The officers of the household were numerous, and trained to all the etiquette of ceremonial. No less than three supreme councils, composed of persons of the highest rank, were appointed to discuss every point of moment—such as the conduct of war, the collecting of the revenue, and other affairs connected with the safety or prosperity of the state. Indeed, in the following history of the conquest of the Mexican empire, we shall find Montezuma frequently appealing for advice to his councils, on account of the dilemma under which he was placed by the Spanish invasion. There were several ministers or principal officers of the court, whose peculiar department was to administer the public revenue, when it had been collected by the subordinate functionaries: amongst these the *Hueicalpriqui*, or treasurer-general, was held in special consideration; nor was less honour paid to those ministers who had under their care the animals, gems, gold, and other treasures of the crown.

The office of ambassador was esteemed by the Mexicans one of particular importance, and to fill so elevated a station, the principal personages in the empire, both with regard to birth, prudence, and merit, were consequently chosen. To invest the character with more respect, much pomp and ceremony was attached to it; but

though they were received with profound respect at every place where they touched, they were compelled not to deviate a step from the road traced out for their march.

The division of ranks is another argument in favour of Mexican refinement. In savage life, physical advantages alone decide the merit or fortune of man; but in proportion as society attains a more artificial form, other and more noble qualifications are fostered and venerated. Mental improvement and advancement in the arts of civilized life are invariably attended with a struggle for distinction, which are unknown in the infancy of rude tribes. In the Mexican empire the distinction of ranks was strictly defined; the nobility were divided into different classes, though the Spaniards have mixed them together under the general appellation of *Caziques.* The higher ranks of nobility was that of *Teuctli,* and to obtain this honourable distinction, the candidate was obliged not only to prove illustrious birth, but to give proofs of great merit, and undergo a course of severe penance for a year, in order to exemplify the virtues of patience and fortitude. But the titles of nobility were in general hereditary. Even at the time of the conquest of Mexico, many families existed in the empire who claimed direct descent from the Aztecas, and carried themselves with great pride and splendour.

The division of lands was curious, and not without ingenuity. They were divided amongst the crown and the altar, the nobility and the communities; and in order to preserve the property of each class free from litigation, certain paintings were kept in the temples. In these maps, the lands of the crown were painted in purple, those of the nobles displayed a scarlet, and those of the communities a yellow colour. After the conquest, these charts served frequently as a just reference to the Spanish magistrate to decide litigious contention among the Indians. Priority of birth was observed in the inheritance of states; but in case of imbecility, or any other disqualifying cause, the father was at liberty to transfer the property to any of his other children, with the restriction, however, of making a suitable provision for the rest.

Great simplicity was observable in the Mexican code of laws; but these were severe in the extreme. Indeed, death was in most cases the punishment awarded to guilt, even for offences which, to us, would appear far from deserving it: for example, the practice of hanging a man or woman for dressing themselves in each other's attire. A traitor to the king was torn in pieces, and those who maltreated an ambassador, or any other public officer of note, forfeited also their lives. Sedition, bribery, and corruption, were

subject to capital punishment, as was also a breach of discipline in war. The same rigour which was displayed against political offences, appeared conspicuous in punishing crimes against morality. Murder, even when perpetrated on the person of a vile slave, was visited with death; nor could a husband inflict that retribution on his adulterous wife without incurring the same punishment, though the latter, as well as her paramour, were either stoned to death, or had their heads bruised and smashed between two stones. The crime of adultery was punished with death almost throughout the empire, but the penalty was inflicted with more severity in some districts than others. It was the practice in Inchoatlan to tear the guilty wife in pieces, and divide her limbs amongst the witnesses that brought to light her offence. But the rigour of the law did not extend to the faithless husband, if he committed his offence with an unmarried female. Death was also the penalty attendant on thefts of importance; and, indeed, there was scarcely any offence against the state, religion, or morality, that did not immediately meet with that rigorous retribution. This excessive and indiscriminate severity speaks greatly against the civilisation of the Mexicans. But ferocity was a striking characteristic of those Indians, and that quality is too plainly displayed both in

their wars, religious ceremonies, and legislature. In this respect they present a great contrast with the Peruvians, who were remarkable for the softness of their manners, and the benignity of their minds.

The progress of the Mexicans in the arts of social life has been unquestionably overrated. Those ingenious paintings, which excited the admiration of the Spaniards, when beheld under the influence of excitement produced by a romantic expedition, would be far from producing the same effect upon calm and reflective spectators. Nevertheless, their skill in this art, as well as the ingenuity with which they wrought in gold the figures of animals, and other objects, is deserving of attention. Perhaps one of the strongest arguments in favour of Mexican superiority, is to be found in the masterly care with which they provided for the defence of their capital. The stratagems, and various modes of fortification employed by the inhabitants during the memorable siege of that city, bespoke a profundity of thought, and a quickness of resolve, which are much above the power of the rude savage. But however considerable might have been the advancement which the Mexicans had made in social life, when compared with the other nations of the new world, it will be readily admitted that they had but little claim to the

distinction, if measured by the then existing standard of society in Europe. That the Spaniards, accustomed to treat with, and war against savages, should have been astonished and surprised at the aspect of men so far superior to their former antagonists, is easily conceived; but when authors set in earnest to write about the public schools, civil institutions, and theatrical representations, of the Mexicans,—when, in fine, they attempt to exhibit that people in the manhood of civilisation, we must receive those accounts with a salutary distrust.

From this rapid sketch we may perhaps conclude, that the Mexicans, though they might sustain the cold rays of the dawn of knowledge, were yet immeasurably far from bearing the dazzling brightness of its meridian sun. At the time of their conquest by the Spaniards they were a warlike, ferocious, and persevering race, possessing the ruder notions of commerce, agriculture, and legislation, and conversant with the first rudiments of art, but immersed in too gross an ignorance, and exhibiting too great a barbarity in their manners, to entitle them to be reckoned within the pale of civilized nations.

LIFE

OF

HERNAN CORTES.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks. Birth, Education, and Youth of Hernan Cortes.

A SPIRIT of discovery and adventure was the characteristic feature of the end of the fifteenth, and a great portion of the sixteenth century. No sooner had the daring genius of Columbus achieved the most extraordinary enterprise recorded in the history of man, than the sons of that nation which had assisted him in what was deemed a chimerical undertaking, became imbued with a portion of his heroic spirit, and appeared only intent on improving his glorious and successful career. The ardent imagination of the Spaniards already began to riot in the prospect of the acquisition of wealth, and the subjugation of empires. Every man, however humble his origin, slender his abilities, or inadequate his resources, considered himself fully qualified to join in the most hazardous and gigantic enterprise. A new species of chivalry appeared to animate the breasts of

men, and the desire of independent military adventure succeeded the wars of the crusades and the dazzling era of knight-errantry.

The genius of martial romance found a theatre for display in a New World, when it ceased to be tolerated in the old, which was now absorbed with the great drama of religious reformation, and the many bloody as well as ludicrous scenes of which it was composed. A vast field was opened to courage and enterprise in the newly discovered land; and a multitude of heroic achievements, extraordinary adventures, and sanguinary crimes, followed the eventful opportunity which naturally called them forth.

Columbus, in discovering a new world, gave also to the pages of history a crowd of names which would otherwise have remained unborn to immortality. A striking illustration was transmitted to posterity, by the conquest of America, of the extent of the powers of man, as well as of the excesses to which he may be hurried by the violence of passions, or the peculiarity of circumstances. Among the numerous adventurers who flocked to the New World, to cull the laurels of victory and seize upon the golden reward held out to daring exploit, many have inscribed their names in the imperishable tablets of fame. But, in the illustrious list, none deserves a more prominent station—none has bequeathed to posterity a memory surrounded with such splendour—a life of greater glory, with a lesser proportion of evil—than the conqueror of the great Mexican empire.

Hernan Cortes was born at Medellin, a small town in Estremadura, in the year 1485. He was the son of Don Martin Cortes de Monroy and

Doña Catalina Pizarro de Altamirano, both hidalgos of noble descent, but possessing a fortune in no manner adequate to their rank. This circumstance was perhaps the most conducive to the future exertions and extraordinary career of young Cortes. Had he been lavishly favoured with the gifts of fortune, satisfied with idle dissipation, and surrendered to enjoyment, it is probable that his genius would for ever have lain dormant, for want of an excitement sufficiently strong for its developement. In conjunction with other illustrious men, Cortes owed his future greatness to the necessity for an exertion of his powers. Don Martin, perceiving in his son the germ of talents, which, by proper cultivation, might arrive at a rich maturity, resolved to direct him towards some profession, which would at once open a field for his abilities, and improve his fortune. A natural quickness and sagacity, a certain degree of eloquence, and a prudent reserve superior to the years of youth, made the elder Cortes entertain the idea, that the pursuit of the law was the career his son might embrace with the greater chance of success.

At the age of fourteen, young Cortes was accordingly sent to the University of Salamanca,—then one of the most renowned seats of learning,—in order to complete a course of studies necessary for his future avocation. But, though the youth had abilities for the acquirement of academical distinction, he was not endowed with the persevering industry indispensable to the pursuit of letters. His ardent temper revolted from the restraint which is the soul of scholastic discipline, and he felt impatient at the laborious tranquillity, the slothful toil, which appeared conspicuous in

those who were eager for the attainment of erudition and science. At the end of two years, therefore, Cortes, though he had made some little progress in learning, found the career chosen for him in direct opposition to his taste and natural inclination. He became disgusted with his inactive life, and, to relieve the wearisomeness of his present occupations, he launched into irregularities which involved him in serious difficulties, and threatened him with expulsion.

The restless disposition of young Cortes now impelled him to abandon his academic labours and return to Medellin. Here he devoted himself wholly to those active sports and exercises which were more congenial with the ardour of his imagination and the impetuosity of his character. He became a proficient in the use of arms, and took great delight in horses and in every description of field sports.

But the violence of his passions did not permit him to restrain his actions within the limits of moderation. His temper was so ardent, and his conduct so dissipated, at this early period of his life, that he gave no indication of the profound policy, and greatness of soul, which were to mark his future career. Possessing all those attractions so irresistible in captivating the regard of females, it is not surprising that he should be involved in intrigues at once prejudicial to himself and distressing to his family. Nature had bestowed upon him great personal advantages. His manners were remarkably engaging, and his address easy and alluring. He was, besides, a complete master in the art of persuasive eloquence—an advantage which, though at that time attended with no laud-

able results, proved, in the sequel, one of the most powerful engines in the advancement of his great and glorious enterprise. He possessed a good stature and a graceful carriage,—a countenance full of animation, with eyes amorous and sparkling. A sound constitution, and a robust frame, rendered him capable of enduring any fatigue; while his fertility of invention seemed sufficient to extricate him from any difficulty. But so many good qualities were now totally useless, if not perverted to purposes deserving only of reprobation; and his father considered with sorrow that turbulent temper which he could not subdue, and that profligacy which he despaired to see overcome. To one creditable object alone was the warm imagination of young Cortes alive. The splendour of military glory filled his ardent mind, and he inwardly sighed for the moment when he might signalize his name by martial achievements. This inclination Don Martin made no attempt to combat. Having lost every hope that the restless and impetuous temper of his son would ever allow him to follow prosperously any civil employment, he was rather pleased than otherwise that he should embrace the profession of arms.

That period was highly favourable to the display of courage, and the acquisition of military renown. The wars in Italy were the theme of much speculation, and the famous Gonzalo de Cordova, surnamed the Great Captain, was the subject of general applause. Of course, the younger scions of the best families in Spain hastened to enrol themselves under his glorious auspices—a circumstance which, together with the vicinity of Italy, perhaps induced Cortes to choose the standard of

that leader, rather than join the bodies of adventurers that were continually sailing for the New World. Don Martin having approved the choice of his son, every arrangement was made for the youth's departure; and as a reinforcement was on the point of marching to join the troops of the great captain in Naples, young Cortes was about to enlist as a volunteer, when he was prevented by a sudden indisposition. Yet to this circumstance, which he then considered as the most severe disappointment, he was indebted for his future splendid career. There was no possibility of eclipsing the glory of Gonzalo in Italy, and even a series of the most fortunate events could scarcely have enabled the young aspirant to obtain renown superior to some of the famous warriors who served under that illustrious leader. To be ranked with Garcia Paredes or Navarro was, indeed, a truly honourable destiny; yet how far inferior to the glorious lot which fortune reserved for Cortes in the New World!

The appointment of Don Nicholas de Ovando to the government of Hispaniola, directed the thoughts of Don Martin and his son to a new channel. Ovando was their kinsman, and it was naturally conceived that, under his patronage and authority, young Cortes would find ample occasion for the display of his powers, and the advancement of his fortune. The idea of departing for Italy, therefore, was totally relinquished, and, on the part of young Cortes, succeeded by an equally ardent wish of hastening to a wider field. At the expense of the public an armament was preparing for the purpose of transporting Ovando to Hispaniola, on a scale of magnitude hitherto

unknown in the preceding expeditions to the same destination. Thirty-two ships were ready, which were to convey no less than two thousand five hundred persons, all intending to settle in the colony. Many adventurers of rank, but of needy fortunes, and many younger sons of good families, but of equally slender means, readily joined this expedition in the sanguine hopes of bettering their conditions. Hernan Cortes was of the number. Yet, when Ovando set out for Hispaniola, in 1502, his young kinsman was prevented from joining him by a fatal and unexpected accident. The predilection of Cortes for amorous intrigue, upon this occasion, proved to be the means of thwarting his intentions with regard to the profession of arms.

Hernan Cortes, though not more than seventeen years of age, had already signalized himself so much for his gallantry, that the fears of his father for the consequences were sensibly excited, and the old man laboured incessantly to expedite the departure of his son from Medellin. At this time young Cortes was deeply engaged in an amour with a lady of that town. One dark night previous to the sailing of the expedition, as he was attempting to gain the bedchamber of his mistress, and scrambling over an old wall to reach the window, just as he had attained the top the tottering ruin suddenly gave way, and he was precipitated to the ground. The fall was so extremely severe, and he was so dreadfully bruised by the accident, that he was rendered totally unfit for the intended voyage.*

This untoward event was a source of great dis-

* Gomara, Cron.

appointment to the sufferer, no less than of poignant sorrow to his father, who saw for the second time the prospects of his son blighted, and inwardly deplored omens which seemed to him to predict no good to his future destiny. The recovery of the youth, meantime, was painful and slow; but though this accident was at once a striking lesson, and a severe chastisement, it did not contribute to an amendment, for the passions of young Cortes remained as violent as ever. Don Martin once more turned his thoughts towards Ovando, who was now settled in his government, and he found it not difficult again to direct the ardent imagination of his son towards that object with which it had been formerly so powerfully struck.

Cortes at length departed from Medellin, and landed, without accident, at Santo Domingo, in the year 1504. His reception was such as would have satisfied the most aspiring. Ovando welcomed him like a son, and lost no occasion of testifying the interest he felt in his advancement, employing him in various stations both of distinction and emolument. But the fervent mind and towering ambition of Cortes was scarcely content with a degree of prosperity which would have completed the desires of many. He sighed for extraordinary excitement and perilous adventure. His military tastes were not sufficiently indulged at Hispaniola, nor had his powers a field wide enough for display. Though in the enjoyment of fortune, Cortes was impatient, and even discontented with his destiny.

A circumstance now took place, which was calculated in no ordinary degree to arouse all the ambition and enterprise of the colonists at Hispa-

niola. Such was the projected expedition of Ojeda and Nicuesa for the purpose of making discoveries, achieving conquests, and establishing settlements in the mainland of America. Don Diego Columbus had succeeded Ovando in the government of Hispaniola, and it is not improbable that this occurrence, no less than the enterprising character of Cortes, induced the latter to add his name to the list of adventurers, some of whom, such as Nuñez de Balboa and Francis Pizarro, were destined to become so celebrated at a future period. The expedition of Ojeda and his companion proved, however, most disastrous to the Spaniards, who met with ferocious and warlike tribes, making a decided opposition both to friendly overtures and hostile attempts. They were, besides, assailed with a variety of calamities; but, however strange it may appear, Hernan Cortes was for the third time prevented from following his inclination. He was suddenly taken ill before the fleet set sail, and compelled to remain at Hispaniola, under the influence of a long and tedious malady. It would seem that the good fortune of Cortes again interposed in his behalf, in order to preserve his life for future glory.

Had he made one of that fatal expedition, he might have shared the melancholy fate of his companions, of whom almost all perished in the space of one year, exposed to constant dangers that led to no result, and enduring hardships without the prospect of reward. Indeed, the only advantage attendant on this expedition was the settlement of a small and feeble colony on the Gulf of Darien, by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, whom fortune had marked out for greater and more prosperous

enterprises in the sequel. Hernan Cortes, on perceiving the ill success of the undertaking of Ojeda and Nicuesa, seemed reconciled to that accident which had prevented him from encountering dangers without glory, and sufferings without recompense. Still his ardent spirit kept him in constant excitement; and among all the foolish projects of discovery and conquest devised by the young colonists at Hispaniola, none appeared to him too extravagant or too difficult. At length, in the year 1511, Don Diego Columbus having proposed the subjection of the island of Cuba, the project was loudly applauded and eagerly adopted, not only by needy and reckless adventurers, but by several persons of note and property in the colony.

The command of the armament fitted out for this purpose was intrusted to Diego Velazquez, a chief who, having resided long at Hispaniola, had acquired great property and consideration, and enjoyed an honourable character for justice and discretion. Hernan Cortes eagerly embarked in this undertaking, and was so fortunate as to obtain the station of joint secretary, with Andres de Duero, to Velazquez. The reputation which he had already acquired for abilities, added, no doubt, to his talents for intrigue, paved the way to that post, which was the foundation-stone of his subsequent splendid and most extraordinary career.

CHAPTER II.

Conquest of the Island of Cuba, and Situation of Cortes.

PERHAPS none of the Spanish conquests in the New World was effected with greater facility than that of the extensive island of Cuba. It will appear singular that when, in November 1511, Diego Velazquez arrived on the coast of an island seven hundred miles in length, and containing a vast population, the whole of the armament fitted out for its reduction amounted only to three hundred men, —and more singular still, that so slender a force should have achieved the enterprise. But the natives of Cuba were not a warlike race, nor had they made any preparations for resisting an invasion; indeed, the only opposition which checked the progress of the Spaniards was made by the Cazique Hatuey, who had established himself at the eastern extremity of the island after being driven from Hispaniola. This chief made a gallant resistance, first opposing the landing of Velazquez, and then sheltering himself in the forests, where he alternately annoyed and was hunted by the enemy. But, despite of his efforts, the conquest of the island was soon effected, and the colony of St Iago and others established. The voluntary aid which Pamphilo Narvaez brought from

Jamaica formed a remarkable feature in this conquest. It procured for him the second post in the expedition, as well as a principal share of glory, of which, indeed, Hernan Cortes greatly partook.

The insinuating manners and excellent abilities of young Cortes rendered him particularly acceptable to Velazquez. Being himself possessed of great prudence, together with no ordinary talents, he was the more gratified when he beheld those qualities in another, allied to the fire and daring courage of youth. Cortes also perceived the advantages of his present station, and assiduously devoted himself to the improvement of these advantages. He carefully cultivated the friendship of Andres de Duero, who enjoyed the unbounded confidence and regard of the Governor, and he made the most efficient use of his natural endowments for the furtherance of his ambitious views. But unfortunately it would appear, that the able exertions of his mind were constantly to be thwarted by the impetuosity of his temper. A singular anomaly appeared to exist in his character. A master of profound policy, and well acquainted with the secret of reading the hearts of men, he not unfrequently overturned, by one rash deed, the fruit of his greatest efforts. A number of the settlers at St Iago resolved to lay some grievances before Don Diego Columbus, in regard to Velazquez; and Hernan Cortes, both for his intrepidity and sagacity, was chosen to be the bearer of this complaint—a task of no small peril, as he would be obliged to pass over to Hispaniola in a canoe.* This injudicious step in his secretary

* Herrera, Dec.

enraged the Governor to such a degree, that he made a vow to inflict the punishment of death on the delinquent. Cortes, however, lost no time in providing for his security. He succeeded in escaping from the hands of those who had orders to arrest him, and took sanctuary in the church. Here he resolved to remain until Andres de Duero and his other friends could intercede with the Governor in his behalf, and induce him to pardon his late conduct. But the invincible inclination of Cortes to intrigue came again to increase his difficulties, and involve him in more imminent dangers. He had succeeded in insinuating himself into the affections of a young maiden of good family, called Doña Catalina Suarez de Pacheco. She dwelt, unfortunately, contiguous to the church, a circumstance which facilitated, to the concealed Cortes, the opportunity of holding clandestine interviews with his mistress. But those who were anxious for his capture were on the alert, and only awaited an opportunity of availing themselves of his imprudence.

One night, having left his sanctuary, in the full confidence that he was unobserved, and far from the reach of danger, he proceeded to an assignation, when he found himself suddenly seized by the back, and unable to make any resistance. He was legally arrested by one of the alguacils of the colony, called Escudero, a person whom he afterwards caused to be executed in New Spain, for sedition. Cortes was immediately cast into prison; but his seeming repentance and becoming deportment, added to the generosity of the Governor, procured his pardon and release, and having married Doña Catalina soon after, upon the birth of a son

he requested the Governor to stand god-father, a favour with which Velazquez readily complied. A sincere and perfect reconciliation appeared again to have taken place, but though the Governor behaved towards Cortes with all possible kindness, he could never be persuaded to reinstate him in his former office. From this moment Cortes conducted himself with the most refined policy. He affected as much humility, as zeal for the affairs of his patron, and used his utmost endeavour to render himself agreeable to him.

In the year 1517 Hernandez de Cordova, having left Cuba with a small expedition, under the sanction and authority of the Governor, discovered, in the beginning of March, the eastern cape of Yucatan. Though this expedition was attended with melancholy effects—the greater portion of the soldiers, with their commander, having fallen victims to their bravery, and the hardships they sustained—still, from the accounts he received of the land, Velazquez was encouraged to fit out another and more powerful expedition, in order to achieve what the former had only commenced. He appointed Juan de Grijalva to command this new armament, which was composed of four vessels, containing two hundred and fifty men,* among whom were Pedro de Alvarado and Francisco de Montejo, who afterwards became much better known as officers under Hernan Cortes. After having discovered the island of Cozumel, the Spaniards coasted along the shore of Yucatan, and carried on a small commerce with the natives, exchanging little European trifles for the metal they so

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

anxiously searched after, and the food which they required. Landing at last on the island of St Juan de Ulua, the Mexican governors of the territories on those coasts were so astonished at the appearance of beings, whose aspect, figure, and weapons, were so different from their own, that they immediately conveyed intelligence to Montezuma, of the strange objects that had so deeply excited their wonder.

Montezuma governed over a vast, populous, and rich empire. The information sent him regarding these singular visitors perplexed his mind, and inspired him with ominous apprehensions. From that moment, until the arrival of the Spaniards in his capital, he remained in a constant state of disquietude, which was abundantly fed by a ready belief in some old traditions, and in some strange prophecies. Meanwhile, the Spaniards remained several days at St Juan de Ulua, during which time they succeeded in procuring a considerable quantity of gold,* and Grijalva felt more assured that the coast near the island was a continent. This discovery highly flattered his expectations; but as his means were totally inadequate to prosecute for the present any very hazardous enterprise, he prudently resolved to require assistance from Cuba before attempting to push his discoveries farther. He was the more confirmed in this resolution by his followers, now greatly reduced by disease, being too small in number to establish a colony, which was his paramount desire.

Grijalva accordingly dispatched Alvarado back to Cuba, with a faithful account of what had

* B. Diaz.

taken place since his departure from that island, sending along with him specimens of the gold which they had already obtained, and instructing him to demand a competent reinforcement to enable the expedition to prosecute their course. After this Grijalva pursued his discoveries about the province of Panuco, which they found covered with populous towns, at the distance of three leagues from the coast.*

Meanwhile, Diego Velazquez had remained in a state of the utmost anxiety since the moment that the expedition had departed from Cuba. He apprehended that the second armament would not be productive of more fortunate results than the one commanded by Cordova. His fears became at length so perplexing and tormenting, that in the persuasion that Grijalva and his men might have perished, he resolved to send a vessel to ascertain their fate. This ship he gave to Christoval de Olid, afterwards one of the principal actors in the conquest of Mexico. But Olid, after sailing some time in the tract of his companions, had his vessel so buffeted and disabled by the weather, that he was compelled to return to Cuba, without being able to carry any intelligence to the Governor. This disappointment increased the uneasiness of Velazquez, and he remained undecided what course to adopt, when he was fortunately relieved from all his solicitude by the arrival of Pedro de Alvarado.

This officer gave the most glowing descriptions of the country which Grijalva had discovered, and the gold which he produced appeared as an incon-

* B. Diaz.

testible corroborative to his assertions. He was accordingly received by the Governor as the bearer of the most joyful tidings,* and treated with such consideration and respect as indicated the value set upon his intelligence. The ambition and avarice of Diego de Velazquez were now extraordinarily excited. The exaggerated reports concerning the wealthy country newly discovered extended rapidly through the island, and aroused the Spaniards, who, in that adventurous age, required but little stimulus to awaken the wildest hopes, and inspire them with notions of the most singular undertakings. None, perhaps, was more powerfully actuated by these sentiments than Hernan Cortes, who saw that fortune had at length brought forward a proper field for the full exertion of his powers, and the gratification of his towering ambition. Latterly he had been extremely assiduous in endeavouring to remove the impression of his former disagreements with the Governor, and he had every reason to suppose that Velazquez entertained nothing but a friendly feeling towards him.

Meantime the reports brought by Alvarado, of the discovery made by Grijalva of a new continent, transported the Governor of Cuba with unbounded joy. He immediately sent messengers to Spain with this important intelligence, whilst he himself devoted his whole attention to the fitting out of an armament competent for the conquest, which was at once to satisfy his avarice and ambition. The preparations were carried on with great activity, nor was it a difficult task to find a sufficient number of adventurers willing to enrol

* B. Diaz.

themselves in the expedition. The choice of a commander, however, to conduct so mighty an undertaking, demanded more care, and excited deep solicitude in the mind of the Governor. He knew that the success of the enterprise mainly depended upon the election, and he was anxious to intrust the command to one whose abilities were equal to his courage. But, at the same time, he dreaded those requisites which he thought indispensable, his natural jealousy suggesting that the possessor of them might be induced to act independent of his authority, as soon as he was no longer under his observance and control.

Several chiefs were pointed out to the choice of Velazquez. Some represented Vasco Porcallo, a person of high rank, and a relation of the Count de Feria, as the most fit for the occasion, whilst the soldiers were inclined to have Grijalva for their leader. The fears and jealousies of Velazquez made him reject both candidates. His own relations, Augustin Bermudez and Bernardino Velazquez, were next considered as likely to obtain the nomination. But the Governor still continued in his irresolute frame of mind. The decisive cast of the destiny of Cortes was at length arrived. The two persons who possessed the entire confidence of Velazquez, as well as the greatest influence in his councils, were the royal treasurer of Cuba, Amador de Lares, and Andres de Duero, his own secretary. These individuals Cortes had, by his insinuating manner, completely won over to his interest, and he now sedulously endeavoured to strengthen this favourable impression. He entered into a secret compact with these confidential officers of the Governor, by which he agreed

to bestow upon them a splendid emolument from the undertaking, should they succeed in procuring for him the command of the expedition.*

The friends of Cortes lost no time in recommending him to Velazquez, with all the ardour and assiduity which attachment for the candidate, as well as personal interest, could suggest. The Governor listened to their proposal with apparent satisfaction, and seemed to be convinced by the truth of their arguments. Indeed, the actual situation of Cortes was most favourable to the furtherance of his views. He had hitherto acted in a dependent capacity, which was not calculated to excite the jealous fears of Velazquez; whilst, on the other hand, he possessed that intrepidity, and those talents, which the Governor considered indispensable in a commander. He had shown, on several occasions, that he was endowed with qualities designed by nature to raise the most sanguine expectations. Besides, his character and temper had been settled and subdued. The turbulent fire of youth had softened into a chastened and well-regulated ardour, and his splendid, though wayward, mind had been corrected and improved by thought. His arrogance had subsided into a frank military boldness, and the resources of his powerful intellect were rapidly maturing and ready to yield fruit. To these attributes of a great man, he added all those physical advantages so conducive successfully to promote the plans of a master-mind and of an intrepid heart. He was, besides, a general favourite among the Spaniards, whose regard he had won by his manners, wit, and frank and generous dis-

* B. Diaz.

position, at the same time that his merit excited their approbation.

Velazquez flattered himself that he had at length found the individual he had so anxiously sought after. Cortes possessed neither sufficient rank, property, nor influence, to aim at independence; and there were, besides, other circumstances that would bind him to the interests of the Governor. The quarrels between him and Cortes had happily terminated after the marriage of the latter, and Velazquez, since that period, had lost no opportunity of showing his good-will and friendly disposition. This circumstance, as well as the importance of the post to which Cortes would be elevated, in preference to other candidates of higher rank and superior pretensions, would bind that chief by indissoluble ties of gratitude and respect. The nomination of Cortes was at length rendered public, and inducements held out to those who might feel inclined to join the expedition. In a short time about three hundred volunteers enlisted at St Iago, among whom were Diego de Ordaz, Francisco de Morla, Escobar, and Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the historian of the conquest of Mexico.

But the spirit of cabal soon began to work, to overturn the fortune of Cortes. The relations of Velazquez lost no time, and neglected no manœuvre, to depict him in unfavourable colours, and to persuade the Governor to revoke his commission; but he persisted in his intention, though his suspicious heart began to harbour incipient doubts. The vigilance of Cortes, however, was proportionate to the danger which seemed to threaten his prospects. Faithfully informed, by Lares and

Duero, of the efforts of his rivals, he quickly applied himself to baffle their machinations. To this effect he disposed his affairs with such uncommon activity, that before the poison which his enemies poured into the ear of Velazquez had time completely to operate, every thing was ready for his departure. He then had a long conference with the Governor, who accompanied him the next morning to the vessel; where they took leave of each other with mutual professions of friendship and regard,* and Cortes set sail from St Iago on the 18th of November, 1519.

* B. Diaz.

CHAPTER III.

Departure of the Expedition for the Conquest of New Spain.

THE departure of Cortes served but to increase the suspicions of Velazquez, and his jealous fears were soon wrought to a painful excitation, notwithstanding the apparent cordiality which had marked the last meeting between the Governor and his general. The rank seeds of doubt and envy, which had been already sown in the breast of the former, were brought to maturity long before their proper season. The precautions which Velazquez had taken to secure the success of his speculations now appeared to him totally inadequate to the danger by which they were threatened. Under the specious pretence of supplying Cortes with a companion of great prudence and abilities, he had caused Diego de Ordaz to be enrolled in the expedition, but with secret injunctions to keep a strict watch over its commander, and transmit a faithful account of all his operations. This expedient, however, was now insufficient to soothe the agitation of Velazquez. With the sentiments natural to captious and subtle minds, he considered that even the fidelity of his own creature might be shaken as soon as he was free from observation,

or exposed to the allurements of a more promising reward.

But the anxiety consequent on such perplexing thoughts was further heightened by the assiduous machinations of the enemies of Cortes. Those who had been disappointed in their expectations of being named to the command of the armament, and more specially the relatives of the Governor, lost no occasion of arousing those fears which they perceived he was but too well disposed to entertain. They represented Cortes as a man meditating to shake off his dependence on his chief, so soon as a fit occasion should offer. To arguments and deductions which bore a strong appearance of truth, other resources were added of a more extraordinary nature. The powerful engine of superstition was called up to second the effect of human reasoning, and the heated fancy of the Governor received the suggestions of the former with the same facility that his jealous disposition listened to the latter. One Juan Millian, a sort of enthusiast, professing to be deeply versed in the mysteries of astrology, was employed by the enemies of Cortes to work upon the credulity of Velazquez. The ominous predictions issued by the soothsayer, completed what the jealousy of the Governor had already begun, and he formed the resolution of recalling Hernan Cortes from the command of the expedition.

Acting upon this idea, he immediately sent messengers to Trinidad, a small settlement in the island to which the armament had proceeded. These messengers carried the most rigid orders to Francisco Verbugo, the chief magistrate of the place, directing him to deprive Cortes of his commission, and appointing Vasco Porcallo to succeed him in

his charge. Similar instructions were also sent to Diego de Ordaz and Francisco de Morla, and every step was taken to ensure the success of the Governor's wishes. Fortunately for Cortes, amongst the many enemies who strove to prejudice Velazquez against him, he could count on two zealous and very powerful friends to support his cause. Accordingly, he received secret intelligence from Lares and Duero of the several intrigues in progress against him, and Cortes immediately took measures to render them harmless. He exerted all his endeavours to bring over to his interests those men whom he knew were most strongly attached to Velazquez. The consciousness of his abilities, aided by dazzling promises, succeeded in seducing Ordaz from his former employer; and, by singular good fortune, the very person on whom the Governor principally confided for the defence of his interest, was the most strenuous in supporting the claims of his rival.

Ordaz represented to Verdugo the great danger of attempting to enforce the commands of the Governor in the actual posture of affairs.* Cortes had so fully won the affections of his followers, that any attempt to deprive them of a commander whose conduct they cherished, and on whose talents they confided, could only be attended with very doubtful results. Whether intimidated by fear, or bribed into consent, the magistrate of Trinidad neglected to enforce the commands of the Governor; whilst, on the other hand, Cortes, even when he was actually defying the power of Velazquez, wrote to assure him of an entire dependence on his authority. Cortes then set sail

* B. Diaz.

for the Havana without further molestation. On his arrival in this settlement, the commander devoted himself assiduously to the task of raising troops, as well as completing the stores and provisions necessary to carry on so daring an expedition. The spirit of adventure that inflamed the Spaniards at that period effectually seconded his exertions. He was immediately joined by Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Montejo, Diego de Soto, and other persons of note, whilst various volunteers of lesser importance daily flocked to his standard.

The provisions, as well as the arms, were carefully inspected by Cortes, and as cotton was a cheap article in the place, he provided his soldiers with strong quilted jackets. His activity was such as befitted the occasion. He clearly foresaw that Velazquez would not be satisfied with the single attempt which he had made to deprive him of command, but that others still more vigorous would be essayed by the suspicious Governor. It was his anxious desire, therefore, to set sail with the utmost expedition, but this event was indispensably delayed by the cares necessary to the equipment of his fleet and army. What he had anticipated was not long in taking place. Velazquez, enraged against Verdugo for having neglected the instructions sent to him, and now convinced that he could repose no trust in Cortes, determined to make a more vigorous attempt to divest him of power. He accordingly dispatched a person of confidence to the Havana, with secret instructions to Pedro Barba, who commanded that settlement. By these he gave full powers to his lieutenant to arrest Cortes, without further ceremony, to send him under a strong escort to St

Iago, and to delay the departure of the expedition until future notice. To the injunctions forwarded to Barba, he added equally peremptory commands to the principal officers, charging them to lend their aid in executing the orders sent to the Governor of the Havana.

A timely announcement of this new danger gave Cortes the means to avert it. Bartholomew de Olmedo, the chaplain of the armament, received secret intelligence from a monk of his order of the plan in contemplation; and Cortes, duly apprised of his peril, lost no time in adopting a line of conduct suitable to the occasion. Amongst his principal officers, there were two on whom he might justly found suspicion. These were Velazquez de Leon, on account of his near relationship to the Governor, and Diego de Ordaz, who, notwithstanding his behaviour at Trinidad, had lately afforded symptoms of a wavering disposition, if not of a secret wish to favour the designs of his former chief. The first of these, a young man of ardent spirit and a frank open character, Cortes easily succeeded in gaining to his party, by depicting, in vivid colours, the glory to be gained by the expedition, and the difficulties which might be thrown in their way by procrastination. Indeed, the commander had worked so successfully on the imagination, and won so entirely on the affections, of the young officer, that he became afterwards one of his most devoted adherents. With regard to Ordaz, he had him carefully removed from his side, under pretence of sending him to Guaniguanico, near Cape Antonio, to procure a fresh supply of provisions necessary for the voyage.

Pedro Barba was equally remiss in executing

the Governor's orders, as Verdugo had been previously at Trinidad. He contented himself with writing to Velazquez, that the fulfilment of his instructions could not be attempted without imminent danger of a revolt from the people over whom he held power. Such an assertion, however, was not devoid of truth. The masterly policy of Cortes had paved the way to complete success. Immediately upon the departure of Ordaz, he assembled his troops, and with the natural eloquence of which he was master, he explained to them the jealous views of Velazquez, and his unjust endeavours to deprive him of command without foundation. He further dwelt on the impolicy of delaying the expedition, when they were all so zealous and eager for the enterprise. Both officers and soldiers felt indignant at this exposure of the Governor's intentions; they were all impatient to set out on an undertaking which was to crown them with laurels, and satisfy their cravings after wealth. They had, besides, spent all their property in equipping themselves for the expedition, and any unnecessary procrastination was to them a source of disappointment and mortification. These motives, added to their devoted attachment to Cortes, which he had succeeded in creating by his winning manners, and the consciousness of his capability for command, induced the troops, with one accord, to call on him not to abandon his post, for they would confidently follow under his guidance, and venture their lives in support of his authority.

Cortes gladly complied with a request so consonant with his wishes, and which he had himself

so ardently laboured to bring about. He declared his readiness to conduct them immediately to the conquest of that rich country which was to confer lasting glory on their valour, and recompense their labours with the prompt enjoyment of wealth. And he further took a solemn oath never to abandon a gallant army which had now afforded so striking an instance of firmness and attachment. These promises were greeted by the soldiers with transports of applause and joy, not unmixed with threats against the secret enemies of their general. Confident in the fidelity of his troops, Cortes was, nevertheless, inclined to keep up a show of deference towards the Governor; and to this intent he again wrote to Velazquez, giving him the strongest assurances of devotion to his service and dependence on his will. He further added, that it was his intention to sail on the following day.

The preparations were now concluded, and nothing appeared to arrest the departure of the armament. Yet the extent of the arrangements bore no proportion to the magnitude of the enterprise for which they were undertaken. A faithful enumeration of the forces, as well as of the supplies and military stores that composed this expedition, cannot but excite the feeling of wonder and astonishment, both as to the slender means of the adventurers, and the rashness of their undertaking. Though the armament had been equipped by the combined exertions of every settlement in Cuba, though the Governor had expended what was then considered a great sum, and though every soldier, to the very last man, had laid out his whole stock in his accoutrements, the expedition was conducted on so narrow a scale as to appear incompatible

with any subordinate speculation, much less so mighty an achievement as the subjection of a vast empire. Eleven vessels, the largest of which was of a hundred tons, three of seventy, and the rest open barks, constituted the whole of the fleet. They carried on board a hundred and nine mariners and mechanics, and five hundred and eight men of the land service, divided into eleven companies, according to the number of ships. But if the number of men was so surprisingly small, the resources by which they were to effect the conquest were still more incompetent. There were only sixteen horsemen, thirty musketeers, and thirty-two cross-bowmen; the artillery consisted of ten brass-field pieces and four falconets.* The rest of the troops were equipped with swords and spears nor did any one encumber himself with defensive armour, which, in such a climate, could not but prove excessively inconvenient. In the absence, however, of the usual means of defence then in practice, the deficiency was in some measure supplied by the quilted cotton-jackets, which appeared to be an adequate protection against the weapons of the Americans.

Such was the extent of the means with which Hernan Cortes and his companions thought themselves enabled to achieve the conquest of a great empire—an empire more extensive in its territories than all the dominions of, and subject to Spain, which was then the most powerful kingdom in Europe. History presents scarcely a more daring undertaking, and the imagination has difficulty to conceive what rational hopes of success the ad-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

venturers could entertain, when embarking on an enterprise which bore rather the appearance of extravagant romance, than the reasonable expectation of military exploit.

But the passions which animated the Spaniards were as powerful as the stimulus by which they were put into motion. Each soldier considered himself as a hero, bound on his own account, and at his own risk, for a conquest that was to crown all his most sanguine expectations. Hernan Cortes was viewed more in the light of a gallant companion, whose great abilities entitled him to exercise over them a reasonable power necessary to the furtherance of the common good, than an absolute commander, enjoying despotic control, and whose caprice and faults might be screened from their comments. Nor did Cortes himself feel dissatisfied with the position in which he stood with respect to his followers. He had a magnanimity of soul above the petty jealousies of vanity; nor did he dislike a chivalrous spirit, which, in fact, gave him a more direct and absolute sway over his men; for he knew that a skilful general ought to manage his soldiers more by the dictates of attachment, than by the suggestions of fear. The most distinguished warriors of all ages and countries were remarkable for a kind of intimate fellowship which existed between them and their troops. Perhaps the greater portion of their success may be ascribed to this sentiment. It certainly contributed materially to the extraordinary career of Napoleon.

Besides, the whole circumstances connected with the conquest of the New World come arrayed in so singular a light, that the feeling of com-

panionship between the leader and his followers was more desirable than in any other war. It was enthusiasm alone that could impel the Spaniards to the bold attempt, as well as support their energies under the difficulties with which it was beset, and the labour by which it was surrounded. But the spirit of enthusiasm was a component part of the Spanish adventurers. The interests of the Christian religion dwelt strongly upon their imagination; and, strange to say, their undertaking partook at once of the somewhat anomalous nature of a military expedition, and a mission for the propagation of their faith. Perhaps Cortes himself was not completely exempt from some tincture of this feeling; at all events, he was not averse to encourage it amongst his troops, as he considered it highly conducive to the success of his plans. Indeed, nothing could more efficiently aid and urge on the spirit of adventure and thirst of wealth with which each soldier was inflamed, than a thorough conviction of the sacredness of the cause in which they were engaged.

Under this impression, Cortes had caused a rich standard of velvet, embroidered with gold, bearing the royal arms and a large cross, to be carried in the expedition. These colours were embellished with a Latin motto to this purport:—"*Companions, let us follow the Cross, for under this guidance we shall conquer.*"

Such was the enthusiasm by which the Spaniards were actuated; and they accordingly ventured boldly into the enterprise, with the security arising from a firm confidence of success. Cortes ordered the eleven companies of soldiers, into which he had divided his troops, to embark, and appointed

a captain to each of them. The names of these officers, most of whom became afterwards highly conspicuous in the conquest of the New World, were Juan Velazquez de Leon, Pedro de Alvarado, Hernandez Portocarrero, Francisco de Montejo, Christoval de Olid, Juan de Escalante, Francisco de Morta, Francisco Salcedo, Juan Escobar, and Gnies Nortes. Cortes himself took the command of the Admiral; the skilful Alaminos he made chief pilot, and to Orozco, an experienced officer, he intrusted the direction of the artillery.

CHAPTER IV.

The Expedition touches at the Island of Cozumel, and arrives at Tabasco.

HERNAN CORTES set sail on the 10th of February, and bent his course to the island of Cozumel. He found, however, on his arrival at the town, that it was totally deserted. The approach of the armament had alarmed the inhabitants, and they fled precipitately into the inland country. The conduct of Alvarado's company, which was the first that landed, was not calculated to dissipate the fears, or conciliate the affections, of these islanders. The Spanish soldiers, in the spirit of conquest, considered themselves entitled to lay hands on whatever they found desirable, and accordingly began to despoil an idol, that stood in a temple near the town, of various ornaments of gold. Cortes, aware of the ill effects which this rapacious disposition might produce in the prosecution of his plans, and willing, on the other hand, to win the inhabitants by all possible means ere he had recourse to arms, severely reprimanded Alvarado for the behaviour of his company, set two or three prisoners at liberty, and ordered an immediate restitution of the articles taken.

These conciliatory measures produced the de-

sired effect. The inhabitants soon lost their apprehensions, and mixed confidently with their visitors. But a more fortunate result occurred to Cortes from his touching at Cozumel. This was the acquisition of a Spaniard to his band, who, from a considerable residence among these Indians, had gained a thorough knowledge of their language, and was, in the sequel, of essential service to the expedition in the capacity of interpreter. The frequent repetition of the word *Castillano*, by the inhabitants of Cozumel, convinced Cortes that some one of his countrymen was living in the island. He accordingly made the necessary enquiries, and was fortunate enough to discover the person in question. When he came into the presence of Cortes, his appearance was so singular as to excite no small degree of surprise amongst the Spaniards. He was completely dark; his attire was composed of a few rags thrown slovenly over his shoulders and round his waist; and in his deportment he bore a strong resemblance to the Indians. He carried a sort of paddle in his hand, and a small bundle on his back, in which, amongst other poor trifles, there was the remnant of a prayer-book. From want of practice he had, in a great measure, lost the usage of his native tongue, and in every respect he conducted himself like the inhabitants of the island.

This man was not wanting, however, in a considerable share of shrewdness, as he proved in the sequel, by his services. He declared his name to be Geronimo de Aguilar, a native of Ecija, and to have received holy orders. It appeared that, eight years before, he had been wrecked while on a voyage from Darien to Hispaniola. He and his

fellow-sufferers had endeavoured to save themselves in a boat; but had been driven on the coast, where they were made prisoners by the natives of the country, and reduced to servitude. Many of these unfortunates had been sacrificed, and others had sunk under excessive labour. Aguilar, however, though exposed to many perils, had been enabled to escape them all, and had remained ever since with a cazique, who treated him with sufficient leniency. Aguilar further stated, that of the whole crew driven on the coast, himself and another man, who had since identified himself with the Indians, and become one of their tribe, were the only persons now alive.

On the 4th of March, Cortes left Cozumel and continued his voyage to the river Grijalva, or Tabasco. The inhabitants of this place having formerly shown much friendship towards Grijalva, Cortes proceeded thither in hopes of a similar reception, as well as of a harvest of gold. His flattering expectations were, however, disappointed. No sooner did he make his appearance before the town of Tabasco, than he found the disposition of the natives completely altered. Instead of friends ready to welcome his arrival, he met with enemies prepared to oppose his progress. Many canoes, filled with warriors, presented themselves in hostile attitude, and near the town about twelve thousand men were assembled to check the invaders. The aspect of the natives indicating determined enmity, Cortes was greatly surprised at such unexpected demonstrations; but it appeared that the Tabascans had been reproached, by other neighbouring tribes, for their amicable reception of Grijalva, and had been stimulated to adopt a very dif-

ferent line of conduct with regard to future visitors. Cortes now clearly foresaw that he should be compelled to have recourse to arms; but desirous of employing every other means before he came to this last expedient, he requested, by the agency of Aguilar, an interview with their chiefs. This demand they peremptorily denied; nor did the threats which the Spanish general pronounced against them elicit other tokens than those of scorn and defiance. Cortes now attempted no further negotiation, but continued his course up the river, resolved to disembark in the immediate vicinity of the town. This intention was soon perceived by the enemy, and they accordingly flocked to the spot where they suspected that a landing was contemplated. In a short time a vast multitude covered the banks of the river in that quarter, filling the air with discordant shouts, and making an astounding noise with horns, trumpets, and drums. The attack commenced by a shower of arrows, and was closely followed up by a fierce rush of canoes full of warriors, who, with their lances and other weapons, vigorously opposed the landing of the Spaniards. A scene of promiscuous disorder ensued; the invaders were compelled to force their way to the banks, fighting immersed to their waist in the water, and struggling desperately through the mud. All this time they were assailed by the missiles and other weapons of their enemies; but the ardent spirit by which they were animated, led them successfully through all difficulties. They at length gained the shore, and Cortes, placing himself at the head of his men, charged the foe with such violence that they were compelled to retreat. He, however, did not think

it prudent, considering the exhausted state of his soldiers, to pursue the natives farther into the country. Fourteen Spaniards were wounded in this action. Cortes reviewed his troops, and having posted sentinels to prevent any surprise, resolved to pass the night in a large court which contained three idols.*

The news of the invasion soon spread through the country; but the Indians, far from being discouraged by a first defeat, made the most formidable preparations to repel the aggressors. Cortes, aware of the determined hostility of the inhabitants, now prepared to meet it with a suitable opposition. He ordered the horses to be brought on shore; each of these he provided with breastplates, and then distributed them amongst the best riders: of this small body of cavalry, thirteen in number, including the chief, Cortes took the command in person. The infantry he intrusted to Diego and Ordaz, and the artillery to Mesa. He ordered those of his wounded men that could bear arms to follow, and having previously heard mass, he advanced in perfect confidence to the plain of Ceutla, where he understood the enemy had assembled. Their numbers covered the place, which rung with the din of their trumpets and drums; their appearance being that of barbarian warriors. They wore feathers on their heads, and large shields to protect their bodies. Their weapons consisted of lances, two-handed swords or maces, bows, and slings; and, to add to the terror of their appearance, they had daubed their faces with black and red.†

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

Cortes had made a detour with the horse, with the double design of avoiding the ground, which was soft and marshy in that place, and of cutting off the retreat of the enemy, by gaining their rear. The infantry, meantime, received gallantly the first discharge of the enemy's arrows, but which proved disastrous to the Spaniards, as they had seventy men wounded, and one killed.* The Indians followed up the attack with furious animosity, notwithstanding the destruction which the artillery wrought amongst their ranks. But the appearance of Cortes with the cavalry soon decided the fortune of the day. The Indians, intent on harassing the enemy in front, did not perceive that chief's arrival until he charged them vigorously in the rear. The ground was perfectly level and smooth, so as effectually to second the operations of the horsemen, who now drove furiously through the enemy, bearing down all opposition before them. The Indians were amazed at so unexpected and fatal an attack, no less than at the extraordinary beings by whom it was effected. Their bewildered fancy conceived both rider and horse to form one strange and formidable monster, and, under this impression, they fled in the utmost dismay to the neighbouring woods and marshes. The rout was complete, no less than 800 Indians being slain, whilst the dead on the other side amounted to no more than two.

This severe blow, added to other skirmishes, in which they were uniformly defeated, broke down the ferocity of the Indians, and made them wish for peace. They now were as anxious to propi-

* B. Diaz.

tiate the enemy, as they had previously been resolute in opposing their advance. Fifteen men, with their faces blackened in sign of sorrow, and carrying a present of fowls, maize, and roasted fish, were immediately sent to Cortes. These were received by the Spanish chief with much kindness, which circumstance emboldened thirty natives of note to appear on the following day, to ask permission to bury their dead. This request was readily granted; and, from that moment, the intercourse between the Spaniards and the Indians became free and uninterrupted. But the levity and inconstancy natural to ignorant and uncivilized men, made Cortes apprehend a renewal of hostilities from the very beings who appeared now so humble and submissive. As soon as the first feelings of astonishment should subside, or a new impulse to act present itself, the Indians might be induced to change their peaceful disposition with the same facility which had marked their former resolutions.

But Cortes, with that clear, calm foresight of probable results which seldom forsook him in the course of his eventful career, resolved to avail himself of the present favourable juncture to strengthen the deference of the natives, by addressing himself to their terrors. For this purpose, he spoke to them in an austere tone of voice, depicting in fearful colours the effects of his vengeance, should they be tempted to meditate any future treason or revolt. To illustrate his threats in a striking manner, he then caused a cannon to be fired, the awful explosion of which, together with its destructive effects on the adjoining wood, filled them with terror and amazement. Their imaginations were now more forcibly struck

than when they were absorbed in the heat of the battle, and accordingly, the impression which the aspect and power of those mortal engines made on their minds was deeper and more lasting. This first experiment was followed by another of equal tendency. The most spirited and best-trained horses were brought forward, and a series of terrific military evolutions exhibited before the astonished Indians. These artifices answered fully the general's expectations. The natives looked on the Spaniards with a sort of reverential awe, and confessed themselves feudatory to their king.

A friendly exchange of civilities now took place between the natives and their former enemies; presents were mutually given and returned, and a perfect understanding seemed firmly established between the parties. Among other things, the natives presented to their conquerors sundry articles which bespoke great ingenuity. Such were various toys of gold made to resemble dogs, lizards, ducks, and other animals. A gift of twenty women was also bestowed on the Spaniards. This boon proved afterwards the most important, as among the females was she who became in the sequel so celebrated under the name of Doña Marina, and so useful in the conquest of the New World. She received baptism, together with her companions, from the hands of Father Olmedo; and as she was destined to act so conspicuous a part in the expedition, and become justly renowned for her fidelity and important services, it will not, perhaps, be amiss to give a rapid sketch of her somewhat singular story, as well as a description of her person.

Doña Marina was a female of high rank amongst her countrymen; and this was not controverted

by her manners, which were easy and commanding, or her character, which was replete with qualifications superior to the natives of the land. She possessed a quick and lively genius, a strong judgment, and a magnanimity which would have done honour to the stoutest warrior. Her outward appearance was in accordance with her rare abilities. Nature had been as partial in giving her the charms of person, as she had been prodigal in endowing her mind with more lasting accomplishments. It would seem that she had been formed to trace no ordinary career in the world; and indeed the perils and adventures of her life were such as fully to justify the supposition. She was the daughter of a Cacique, or Prince, feudatory to the Emperor of Mexico. Unfortunately, her father died whilst she was yet an infant; and her mother, marrying again, and having a son by her new husband, Doña Marina became an object of dislike. Her unnatural parent determined to defraud her of her inheritance in favour of her younger child, and to this effect, she gave her privately away to some merchants of Xicallanco, at the same time circulating a report that she had died, and taking every step to give a colour to this assertion. The merchants to whom Doña Marina had been given, sold her in turn to one of the chiefs of Tabasco, who, as it has been related, presented her afterwards to Cortes. A mutual attachment arose between the Spanish general and this lovely slave. She became sincerely, faithfully devoted to him, accompanied him in all his perils and adventures, and did the most important services, not only to the chief, but to the Spanish cause in general. As she was perfectly acquainted with the Mexican language, as well as

with the Maja tongue, in which she conversed with Aguilar, a medium of intercourse was thus obtained between the Spaniards and the Mexicans, Tlascalans, and other nations of New Spain. But the natural quickness of Doña Marina soon enabled her to acquire a competent knowledge of the Castilian language, by which the circuitous mode of interpretation became unnecessary in the sequel, and the means of communication greatly facilitated and simplified.

But it was not only in the office of interpreter that Doña Marina was of service to her newly-adopted countrymen. She was acquainted with the manners, modes, and prejudices of the Americans, as well as conversant with their characters and dispositions. She was accordingly usefully employed in the various negotiations which took place, discovered premeditated treasons, and suggested the means of avoiding dangers. Cortes was not long in perceiving the value of such an acquisition. He knew that there was no being on whom man could repose a more implicit trust than in a female of intelligent mind and courageous heart, when that heart was bound by the ties of affection. The watch of female attachment was perhaps the most effectual guard he could place over his security—a security which, he was aware, could not but be often threatened in the hazardous enterprise on which he had embarked.

Cortes remained a few days longer in Tabasco, which time he devoted to the care of tending the sick and wounded, as also to that of persuading the natives to persevere in their allegiance to their new master the King of Spain. The Indians had no difficulty in making promises which

bore the aspect of sincerity. They evinced a willing readiness to perform whatever was required of them by the conquerors. They accordingly aided the Spaniards in erecting a large cross, made of the *cieba* tree, on the field of the recent battle. On Palm Sunday they attended in procession to do homage to that symbol of the redemption of man, and appeared converted to the Christian faith. After this ceremony there was nothing to detain Cortes at Tabasco, and he therefore issued orders that every thing should be in readiness for their departure. That same evening the Spaniards took a friendly leave of the natives, who reiterated their vows of fealty, and then embarking, awaited for the morning to set sail for San Juan de Ulua.

CHAPTER V.

Interview with the Messengers of Montezuma, &c.

CORTES endeavoured to keep his course as much as possible to the shore, and arrived in the harbour of San Juan de Ulua about the beginning of April.* He had, however, scarcely cast anchor, and hoisted the standard of Spain, when he perceived two large canoes full of people making up to the fleet. Among these Indians there were two who seemed persons of note, and who came into the principal vessel, without any symptoms either of fear or hostility. On the contrary, they addressed Cortes apparently in a most friendly manner, but in a language which Aguilar could not understand. Doña Marina, however, obviated the difficulty, by translating to the latter into the Maja tongue what the strangers spoke in the Mexican. These two persons appeared to be the messengers from a chief, intrusted with the government of that province by a powerful monarch whom they named Montezuma. They were commissioned to learn what were the intentions that induced Cortes to visit their coast, and at the same time to offer them any assistance

* Robertson. B. Diaz says the 21st.

which might be necessary for the prosecution of his voyage.

Cortes assured the deputies that he and his followers were duly grateful for their friendly offers, and that in coming amongst them they were solely actuated by sentiments of peace and amity. He further informed them, that he was charged with a most important mission to their sovereign, which he considered highly beneficial to their country. He then invited them to take some refreshments, and sent them back to their employer with a few trifling presents of cut glass and other toys. The deputies, satisfied with this amicable reception, brought to their chief a faithful report of what they had observed; and confident that the strangers were really guided by sentiments of amity, the Indians made no sort of preparation to oppose their landing. On the contrary, when they perceived, on the following day, that the Spaniards were disembarking, they hastened to aid them in their operations with the utmost alacrity and good will. By this means Cortes was soon enabled to land all his troops, horses, artillery, and every other appendage of the expedition. He then gave orders for constructing huts for the soldiers, and made the necessary arrangements to put the cantonment in a state of defence. Some of the friendly natives willingly proffered their assistance in these works, whilst others brought to their new guests various supplies of bread, fowls, and fruit. They further announced to Cortes, that the governor of the province would shortly wait upon him; an intelligence which the Spanish commander received with apparent satisfaction.

Accordingly the next day, that personage, whose

name was Teutchlile, accompanied by Quithalpitoc, another chief, entered the Spanish camp, attended by a numerous train. Cortes, sensible of the importance which attached to these persons as ministers of a powerful sovereign, received their visit with every possible mark of attention and respect. To the profound reverence which they made, he answered with a suitable return of civilities, and invited them to partake of his meal. He then proceeded to inform the Mexicans, that his object in coming into their country was to fulfil an important mission intrusted to him by his master, Don Carlos, the greatest monarch of the earth. He added, that the matters which he was to treat, and the propositions which he was to make to Montezuma, were of such a nature as to exclude the possibility of imparting them to any one but that Emperor himself. He therefore requested to be conducted to their master with the least possible delay. The Mexican chiefs were no less surprised than displeased at such a demand. They could scarcely conceal the painful emotion produced by the stranger's words, and Teutchlile even ventured to express his sentiments in a tone indicative of haughtiness and displeasure.* But these natural instigations of offended pride were promptly checked by other considerations. They knew that Montezuma was averse to communicate with these strangers, whose first appearance on the coast of his empire had filled him with the most tormenting apprehensions. But, on the other hand, they dreaded to provoke, by an inconsiderate zeal, the anger of the Spaniards.

* B. Diaz.

Before they used their endeavours to dissuade Cortes from his intentions, they considered it would be highly prudent to conciliate his good-will by a show of respect and generosity.

They accordingly announced that they were bearers of some presents which, in the name of Montezuma, they came to offer to the Spaniards. Teutchlile then ordered the gifts to be introduced with much parade and solemnity, and Cortes was no less surprised than gratified at their inspection. They consisted of a considerable quantity of fine cotton garments, together with a profusion of plumes of different colours, wrought into a variety of ornaments, and of several toys of gold, of a workmanship as ingenious as the materials were valuable. To these rich objects were added a great abundance of fowls, bread, and other articles of consumption. The Spaniards were highly pleased at the sight. Their thirst of wealth was rendered more keen, and their ardour for conquest received an additional stimulus. The sentiments which the rich display produced in their minds was indeed totally opposite to the wishes of Montezuma. Far from being satisfied with the offered gift, they longed to visit a land so favoured by nature, and to possess themselves of its tempting treasures. Cortes, however, resolved to preserve a friendly intercourse with the natives, and in return for the presents brought by Teutchlile and Quitlalpitoc, he gave them several artificial diamonds, a richly-carved arm-chair, and a crimson cap, ornamented with a golden medal of St George, requesting that these might be carried to Montezuma, as a token of the amicable sentiments of the Spanish king towards the Mexican emperor. He

then, in a more peremptory tone, reiterated his demand of being admitted to an interview with the latter,—a request which the Mexicans promised should be faithfully conveyed to their master.

During these proceedings some painters, who attended the Indian chiefs, were busily engaged in transferring to pieces of fine white cotton, an accurate representation of the strange objects that called forth their wonder and surprise. Not only the persons of Cortes and his companions were faithfully delineated, but the ships, horses, artillery, and every other object of novelty, found a place in these pictures. The Spanish general being informed that this work was undertaken with a view of conveying to Montezuma a lively representation of the singular beings that visited his dominions, considered this a most favourable opportunity to impress that emperor with a dread of the Spanish power. He accordingly caused the trumpets to summon the troops to arms,—the soldiers formed immediately into battle array, and went through several military exercises with great skill and perfect discipline. The cavalry were next called to exhibit their strength and activity, —and the spirited bearing of the horses, together with the wonderful ease and precision with which the riders performed their different evolutions, filled the Mexicans with speechless amazement. But when the artillery sent forth its portentous explosion, their surprise was changed into terror and dismay,—some fell with their faces to the ground, and others betook themselves to flight. Indeed, it was not without difficulty that they regained their self-command, and that Cortes succeeded in calming their apprehensions. The

painters then exercised their ingenuity in inventing new symbols to convey an idea of the last fearful scene to Montezuma.

Whilst they were thus employed, Teutchlile was struck with the appearance of a helmet, which, he said, bore a strong resemblance to one which now adorned the head of *Huitzilopochtli*, the god of war. He accordingly begged permission to present it to the Emperor, a desire with which Cortes readily complied. The Mexicans now took leave of their guests, and retired from the camp, giving strong assurances that they would receive an answer from Montezuma with the utmost expedition. These promises were not idly made. The Mexican empire was governed at the time with a strictness of police with which Europe was unacquainted at that period. Men were trained from their infancy to the office of couriers by a regular system, so that they had acquired from habit, as well as nature, a wonderful degree of shrewdness and agility. These men were posted at certain intervals, along the principal roads of the empire, by which means they were enabled both to relieve each other by moderate stages, and to convey the intended intelligence with astonishing rapidity. Upon this consideration, it ceases to be a wonder that the message and the presents of Cortes should be received at the capital, which was at a distance of 180 miles, and an answer returned to San Juan de Ulua, within the space of a few days.

Montezuma was greatly surprised at the information brought to him both by means of the pictures, and the verbal accounts of his messengers. The presents sent by Cortes excited his curiosity;

but there was one which produced the most melancholy feeling. The helmet which had attracted the attention of Teutchlile, failed not to create even a more powerful sensation in the bosom of his master. He looked, indeed, upon this fatal token as a mysterious emblem of the approaching end of his reign. These unfavourable surmises he founded upon a tradition then current among the Mexican people. It was widely circulated, and generally believed, that *Quetzalcoatl*, the god of the air, had disappeared a long time since, but with a promise of returning after a certain period, when he was to assume the government of Mexico, and reign over its children in peace and tranquillity. This tradition, combined with the first appearance of the Spaniards, in whom the Mexicans found some tokens of resemblance with their mythological notions of the god of the air, made them suppose that this deity was come to fulfil the ancient promise, and resume the government of the empire.*

Such an impression could not but prove highly mortifying to Montezuma. His jealous fears were strongly excited, and he shrunk with repugnance from the meeting which Cortes had so earnestly requested. His answer was accordingly contrary to the wishes of the Spaniards; but afraid, on the other hand, to inflame their anger, and awaken their revenge, he accompanied his denial with such magnificent presents, as might tend, in some degree, to lessen their disappointment and mollify their indignation. Scarcely had a week elapsed, when Teutchlile returned to the Spanish camp,

* Clavigero.

attended by a train of a hundred Indians, bearing the presents sent by Montezuma. As they came into the presence of Cortes, the deputies from that Emperor touched the earth with their fingers, and then kissed them, in sign of profound respect. This done, they proceeded to exhibit the gifts which they were commissioned to bestow; but, in order that Montezuma's generous magnificence might more powerfully strike the imagination of the Spaniards, as well as prepare them for a denial to their requested interview, they began to spread the various articles on the ground in such order as might increase the effect of the display. The Spaniards were no less struck at the ingenuity of the workmanship of these presents, than their admiration was excited at the rich productions of the country. Stuffs of cotton so fine, and so delicately wrought, as to vie with silk in their texture; landscape pictures, formed with parti-coloured feathers, with such ability as to rival the creations of the pencil in truth of design and beauty of execution; curious ornaments of gold, worked into a perfect imitation of different animals, together with a variety of collars, bracelets, and other trinkets of the same metal; such were the dazzling objects that now greeted the astonished view of the Spaniards. But what chiefly engrossed their attention, and awakened their wildest hopes, was an enormous plate of gold, of circular form, made to represent the Mexican age, or cycle of fifty years, and containing a sun in the centre. This piece was very massive, nor could it be less than ten thousand sequins in real value.*

* Clavigero.

This, together with several specimens of pearls, precious stones, and unwrought gold, all the produce of the country, could not but increase that desire which the Mexicans had thought to appease by this injudicious measure.

Cortes expressed the warmest acknowledgments, and evinced the most profound respect for the monarch who afforded so striking an instance of munificence. This favourable disposition encouraged the ambassadors to discharge the second, and more painful part of their mission; and accordingly, in the most conciliating terms, they proceeded to relate the disinclination which the Emperor had to the appearance of the Spaniards at his court. He, however, endeavoured to soften this denial by describing the difficulties which the strangers would have to encounter in crossing barren deserts and hostile tribes, as well as the alarm and jealousy which the arrival of foreign troops in the capital would disseminate among his subjects. Cortes, upon this announcement, saw the necessity of adopting a more decided tone. He therefore declared, in a resolute manner, that he could not return to his country until he had faithfully discharged the commission with which he was intrusted by his sovereign; and firmly persisted in his previous demand of visiting Montezuma.

The Mexicans were at once surprised and chagrined at this unbending spirit of the Spaniard. They were at a loss what course to adopt. The desires of their master were as absolute as the demand of Cortes was now peremptory. They dreaded to disobey the former, yet trembled to provoke the latter. In this dilemma they endeavoured to conciliate a middle term, by which, without abso-

lately rejecting the wishes of the strangers, they might yet be prevented from advancing towards the capital. Acting upon this idea, they prevailed with the Spanish commander to promise not to move from his present position until a messenger had been sent to, and further instructions received from, Montezuma.*

The decision with which Cortes persisted in his original design, failed not to produce a strong sensation upon the Mexican sovereign. It would appear that the tone adopted by the Spanish commander left no room to hope any change of purpose from negotiation. It was incumbent on Montezuma either to receive him in the friendly character due to an ambassador, or to oppose his further progress as an avowed enemy. But these alternatives were both repugnant to the Mexican monarch. This was certainly not owing to a consciousness of weakness, for the empire, over which he ruled with an absolute sway, was as rich in resources as it was vast in extent. Indeed, in the short space of 130 years, the existence which tradition assigned to the empire, it had arrived to a degree of grandeur and power which seemed incompatible with so short a period. It had attained the age of full virility, without passing the necessary stages of slow infancy or progressive youth. The toil of centuries appeared to have been effected by the will of sudden chance. The dominions of Montezuma extended above 500 leagues from east to west, and more than 200 from north to south. These vast territories contained provinces abounding in wealth, fertility, and population in

* Gomara, Cron.

accordance with their extent. Nothing, indeed, was wanting that could render Montezuma a great monarch, endeared in the eyes of his subjects, and a formidable foe to his enemies. The nation over which he ruled was warlike by nature; the numbers he could bring into the field immense, and his authority over such multitudes unbounded. Had he indeed, with these mighty resources, fallen on the Spaniards whilst they were yet without allies, destitute of provisions, and unacquainted with the country, "they must have either perished in such an unequal contest, or have abandoned the enterprise."*

Nor was Montezuma wanting either in abilities to plan, courage to undertake, or constancy to persevere. He was largely endowed with those martial qualities which stand paramount in the esteem of warlike nations; and he possessed a temper violent by nature—a will made despotic by habit and confidence, and rendered arrogant by success. He was respected by the vast mass of his subjects, and his enemies looked upon him with terror and alarm. His capacity for command had given him absolute sway over the former, and his victories had inspired the latter with a just dread of his arms. Yet this monarch, so haughty and so powerful, who could bring multitudes into the field of battle, in which field, multitudes had been also dispersed, routed, and subdued, seemed irresolute and doubtful at the approach of a handful of strangers. From the moment of their first appearance near his dominions, he had exhibited symptoms of indecision and timidity strangely at variance with

* Robertson.

his real character. Far from adopting those vigorous measures which his conduct on former occasions would have led to expect, and far from showing that impatience of opposition which his station seemed to counsel, and his power to justify, he acted with that hesitation which obstructed his ulterior proceedings, and proved so fatal in the end.

But the solution of this enigma in the conduct of Montezuma, is to be found in the influence of superstition. There was a prevalent opinion among the Mexicans, that awful disasters were to fall upon them by the agency of strange and powerful invaders. The supernatural fears by which the people were deluded, exercised the same lamentable power over the mind of their sovereign. Ancient traditions, fearful prophecies, and singular deductions, the legitimate offspring of the marvellous, towards which ignorance is so irresistibly impelled, were readily received and carefully cherished by a ruler, who, however competent to govern a rude nation, was not endowed with that strength of intellect, nor possessed that state of civilisation, necessary to treat such chimeras with contempt. Instead, therefore, of following the bent of his impetuous temper, he listened to the suggestions of his weak fancy; and he lost that time in temporizing with his enemies which ought to have been employed in crushing their pretensions.

The pertinacity of Cortes in adhering to his purpose seemed, however, to throw a degree of energy into the heart of Montezuma. He felt no less indignant at the presumption of the strangers, than at their temerity in provoking so powerful a king in his own dominions. His stormy

passions were aroused, and in a transport of rage he swore that he would sacrifice the Spaniards to the deities of the empire. This violent gust of passion, however, evaporated in idle noise. Instead of collecting his forces, and marching instantly to meet the enemy, Montezuma contented himself with assembling his council, and asking their advice. His wavering doubts returned—his fears were rekindled—and his conduct partook of that fatal indecision which had marked his former operations. But the time for deliberation was past, and every moment spent in useless negotiation was an addition of strength afforded to the enemy. Montezuma, after the consultation, came to no more effectual resolution than that of issuing a most peremptory command to the Spaniards to quit his dominions. This order was rendered perfectly nugatory by the magnificence of the presents with which it was accompanied. A singular fatality prompted the Mexican emperor to persevere in sending to the Spaniards, as an inducement for their departure, that which was in reality the most powerful temptation for their stay.

Such were the feeble measures by which the injudicious Montezuma was paving the way to the daring attempts and the success of his enemies.

CHAPTER VI.

First Settlement of the Spaniards in New Spain.

WHILST the Mexican monarch remained in this state of perplexity, Cortes himself was in a situation but little more to be envied. A spirit of disunion and discontent had begun to prevail amongst his followers, and this event threatened very serious results. Cortes was well aware of the difficulties of his position. Despite of his unquestionable talents, and impartial conduct on all occasions, and notwithstanding his reputation for courage, and the confidence which he had inspired in his soldiers, he was fully sensible of the jealous eye with which he was regarded by the partisans of Velazquez. That governor had still a strong party to uphold his interests in the expedition, and the members by which it was composed failed not to avail themselves of every opportunity to make known their ideas. All the vigilance and policy of Cortes had been called into action to palliate the dangers by which he felt himself surrounded. But though he had abundantly succeeded in making to himself a powerful party of devoted adherents, he had not yet been able to remove the prejudices, or shake the fidelity, of many of his principal officers. These

still persevered in considering their commander in no other light than the delegate of Velazquez, and the knowledge of such a conviction was to Cortes a source of much disquiet, and the theme of important speculation. From the very moment he had quitted Cuba, his enterprising mind had conceived the bold project of acting independently of his employer. An ardent spirit, and a consciousness of genius, made him averse to act in a subordinate capacity to a man much his inferior, no less in abilities than in military endowments. Besides, he anticipated that the progress of the undertaking would continually be obstructed by the interference, as its success would be compromised by the jealousies, of the Governor. Under this impression, he felt the more inclined to follow the bent of his own inclination, and to effect so desirable a consummation had been the subject of his constant thoughts.

Still the project was beset with difficulties, and he dared not, by a precipitate haste, destroy what he had already accomplished towards the task. His prudence and good fortune had already saved him twice from the jealous power of Velazquez; but the dangers might be repeated, and in order to lessen these, he had sedulously employed his every endeavour to render himself popular amongst his followers. But notwithstanding all his efforts, his wishes were not crowned with complete success, for he had to look with a jealous eye on Velazquez de Leon, Diego de Ordaz, and Escobar, who were not only themselves faithfully devoted to the Governor, but had succeeded in keeping the same sentiments alive in a considerable portion of the troops. An opportunity soon offered itself

for the malecontents to testify their disapprobation of their general's proceedings. They had already observed, that in the several orders issued by Cortes, as well as in the act of taking possession of Cozumel, the name of Velazquez had never been mentioned, but that things had always been carried on as if Cortes had received his power from the sovereign, and not from the Governor of Cuba. This want of regularity, bearing such strong marks of the commander's real intentions, had greatly offended Ordaz and his faction; but now a fatal cause presented itself, to justify in some degree the murmurs of discontent.

The soldiers were exposed to a combination of hardships and calamities that could not but excite the most impatient sensations in the minds of those who were already disposed to view a prospect through the medium of disaffection. The sandy spot where the camp was pitched lay exposed to the attacks of mosquitos, which came in swarms, and allowed the soldiers no moment of repose. Added to this, many had been attacked by diseases peculiar to the country, and others, but ill-recovered from their wounds, bore with displeasure any toilsome duty required of them. Besides, the expedition was suffering severely from the want of provisions. The bread was spoiled—the bacon and other articles rotten. The fear of famine haunted the imaginations of many—the necessity of coming to some determination was evident to all. In this emergency, Cortes proposed to seize on the fortified town of Chiahuitzla; which proposal drew forth the most violent murmurs from the adherents of Velazquez, who contended it was an act of madness to pro-

ceed farther into the country with so incompetent a force—a force, too, weakened by fatigue and disease, and lessened by a considerable loss.* In this critical juncture, Teutchlile arrived with the ultimate and peremptory command of Montezuma, that the strangers should instantly leave the country. It was in vain that Cortes, with great firmness, endeavoured to intimidate the messenger; the Mexican treated his words with indifference, and departed from the camp in indignation.

Every intercourse was now broken off between the natives and the Spaniards; the last act amounted to a declaration of war, and Cortes accordingly prepared his mind for a commencement of hostilities. This event, though perfectly natural in itself, produced more than ordinary sensation amongst the Spaniards. It was now that the faction opposed to Cortes began to express their sentiments in the most unequivocal manner. They no longer limited themselves to the hollow murmurs of complaint, or the clandestine workings of intrigue, but commissioned Diego de Ordaz, the leader of the faction, to represent to the general the madness of remaining in the land, and their resolution of returning to Cuba. Cortes received this intimation with perfect coolness and composure. Though the danger that threatened the demolition of his fondest hopes was so imminent, and though he was fully alive to the difficulties of his situation, he yet suffered not his self-possession to be surprised for a single moment. He had already prepared for this perilous contingency. In the science of intrigue cultivated by Ordaz, the partisans of Cor-

* B. Dias.

tes had made no trivial progress. Portocarrero, Sandoval, Alvarado, Escalante, Olid, Lugo, and Bernal Diaz, were bound to their commander by the closest ties, not only of fidelity, but of friendship. In upholding the cause of their general, they warmly advocated the interest of their friend. Cortes, by his affability, generosity, and winning manners, had so entirely ingratiated himself into the devotion of these officers, that they were not only ready to support all his pretensions, but toiled incessantly to infuse the same spirit into the mass of the soldiers. Several clandestine meetings had been held for the purpose of investing Cortes with a command in the expedition independent of Velazquez, and the above-mentioned partisans had even gone round the camp to canvass the votes of the soldiers in favour of this scheme.*

Hernan Cortes displayed throughout this affair a refinement of policy worthy of admiration. He listened with mildness to the arrogant language of Ordaz and his companions, and then, affecting to be governed only by a desire for the general good, issued orders that the troops should prepare for their return to Cuba. At this moment, what he had anticipated punctually took place. His adherents began fiercely to protest against such a resolution, declaring that they had been beguiled from their ease and comfort to try new fortunes—that they had exhausted all their stock—and that it was the height of folly and injustice to retrace their steps merely because some of the party had neither the fortitude to endure hardship, nor the courage to tempt danger. They ended by loudly

* B. Diaz.

calling upon Cortes to lead them on to conquest, for they would faithfully adhere to his fortunes; and they invited, in a taunting manner, such as were not endowed with sufficient heart for the enterprise, to return to the Governor at Cuba.

Cortes, inwardly rejoicing at this expression of sentiments in unison with his own, affected yet to be astonished at a declaration which he had himself assiduously laboured to bring into maturity He declared, that in all his operations he had the common weal constantly in view, and that, if he had given orders for the re-embarkation of the army, it had been in the firm belief that such was the general desire. That to this conviction he had readily sacrificed his own inclination, which prompted him to persevere in the glorious though difficult path into which he had boldly entered. He was, however, delighted to perceive, that his followers were animated by the sentiments of true Spaniards, and that he would, by his own conduct, show himself worthy of leading such gallant men to victory. These words produced a magic effect on the army; for they tended not only to confirm the adherents of Cortes in their designs, but to convert the adverse party, through the dread of being considered deficient in courage and resolution.*

Cortes now conceived it would be advantageous to his plans to begin a settlement in the country. This infant colony was called by the name of *Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz*,† to correspond at once with the sanguine hopes and the piety of the conquerors, the day in which they set foot on land being Good

* Herrera, Dec.

† The Rich Town of the True Cross.

Friday. The foundation of this town was celebrated with due solemnity; and Cortes, following up the plans which he had already arranged in his mind, proceeded to the installation of authorities to govern the new settlement. He had assembled his principal officers in order to make the election of these magistrates; yet he had so skilfully prepared the matter, that the choice fell upon his most devoted partisans. Portocarrero, Alvarado, and Olid, who had always been conspicuous for their adherence to their general, were the persons who held the principal posts in this Junta. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cortes should be elated at the command of so powerful an instrument; nor that, secure of the devotion of his officers to his interest, he should have ventured upon a step which, at the first view, would appear a hazardous experiment. Such was the resolution which he now took, of laying down his commission at the foot of the recently constituted authorities.

This measure, though in appearance of little importance, was nevertheless one of the most profound and timely adopted by the genius of Cortes. He knew the precarious tenure by which he held his power, and he was aware, that the form of justice was always respected by man, however indifferent he might prove to the substance. In the formation of the government of *Villa Rica*, he found what was necessary for his plans. Though that Junta was illegal, formed as it was by constituents who had not the right of election, and though, consequently, the power which it might bestow was illegitimate and usurped, yet Cortes, who aimed only to dazzle, not to argue with his sol-

diers, considered a decision from that body fully sufficient for his views. He accordingly, with signs of profound deference, entered the council the day of its first deliberation, and addressed that body in an eloquent and flattering harangue prepared for the occasion. He began by paying the deepest tokens of submission, and admitting the legality of that authority which it was the first interest of the settlement to establish. He declared that he considered their jurisdiction over the colony to be arrayed in all the sacred attributes which could be conferred by royalty itself, and that their power to execute was as unimpeachable as their right to legislate. Under this impression, he came to lay down a command which he had received from Velazquez, but which, on account of the important change which had now taken place, he could no longer hold with a feeling of justice or propriety. Besides, his commission having already been revoked by the Governor, he was now placed in a situation which rendered his jurisdiction questionable to the meanest capacity. Should he lead an army acting under this persuasion, he could neither command with freedom, nor the soldiers obey with satisfaction. He therefore laid down the rank which he enjoyed, and would be ready to descend to the station of a soldier. His resignation was accepted, and he withdrew from the council.

Cortes was not long in perceiving the favourable results of his intrigues. The Junta came to an unanimous determination not only of investing him with the supreme power over the army, but even of electing him to the first civil capacity in the colony. He thus combined the functions of gene-

ral and magistrate, and was clothed with absolute sway over the expedition. That this resolution might not bear the aspect of a secret cabal, the members of the Junta assembled the army, and proceeded to acquaint them with the transaction. The task, however, was opened with those preliminaries which were certain to captivate the attention, as well as win the concurrence, of the soldiers. The military talents of Cortes were strongly dwelt upon, and his impartiality and love to his followers described in the most seductive colours. Mention was made of the success which had hitherto attended his actions, and the most flattering auguries were formed of his future career. The eulogium of Cortes, and his nomination to supreme command, were greeted by his followers with enthusiastic shouts of approbation. They joyfully assented to the decree of the Junta, and proffered a sacred oath of faithful adherence to their general. Cortes saw his schemes crowned with success, and congratulated himself on having thus become free from the shackles which formerly impeded his operations. He was now independent of the Governor, by the decree of a council, and by the acclamations of an army, which would always support his claims with ardent zeal. He knew how eminently conducive this devotion and dependence on his will would be to the success of his undertakings.

But affairs had now arrived at a posture which could not but excite the indignation and resentment of the disaffected. Though the number of these was considerably diminished, the adherents of Velazquez still persisted in forming themselves into a body of opposition. The ringleaders of the

faction began loudly to protest both against the decrees of the Junta and the sanction of the army. These acts were qualified as being treasonable, illegal, and rebellious, and a fatal spirit of fermentation circulated through the settlement. Cortes and his partisans were on the alert. Their attention was principally directed to the soldiers, who, partly by timely gifts, partly by hopes of future prosperity, together with the conviction that the great majority had declared for Cortes, and would at any risk support his claims, operated so effectually on their minds, that they soon joined their approbation to that of the rest of the army. But Diego de Ordaz, Velazquez de Leon, Escobar, Escudero, and a few others, far from being intimidated by the almost total defection of their party, expressed their sentiments with greater warmth than ever. Cortes now saw the urgency of putting an end to the mutiny, and, with a promptness of decision suitable to the occasion, he seized suddenly on the malecontents, and secured them with fetters. This vigorous measure immediately quelled the sedition; nor was it necessary to continue its severity much longer. Cortes, in a few days, set his prisoners at liberty, and conducted himself towards them with such soldierly frankness and cordiality, offering to send them back to Cuba, that they were at length won over to his cause, and ever after proved most devoted to his interests.*

Meantime the want of provisions induced Cortes to send Alvarado with a hundred men to search the country in quest of such an indispensable

* B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.

article; who returned in a short time, after having visited a few villages, in which he found great abundance. The inhabitants, however, had fled at the approach of the Spaniards, and, upon their arrival at the first of these places, they were filled with horror and disgust. They found in a temple the bleeding bodies of several men and boys, who, it would appear, had been recently sacrificed, for they perceived the knife with which the dreadful ceremony had been performed still reeking and warm with blood.* Cortes immediately determined to advance into the country, as nothing now could obstruct his operations. With an army small in number, but endowed with courage, enterprising, and faithfully devoted, he feared not to penetrate into a land which, though redoubtable in power, was so alluring for its wealth; and a fortunate and unexpected event confirmed the chief in his bold resolution. Alvarado, in one of his excursions, had met a party of Indians loaded with provisions, and approaching the Spanish camp with symptoms of great cordiality. These natives were introduced to Cortes, and declared themselves to be messengers from the Cazique of Chempoalla. That chief invited the Spaniards to his residence, and accompanied the invitation with warm offers of friendship and regard.

There was something mysterious in this business, which required careful investigation as to the real motives from which it had originated. Some treason, and well-concerted plot, might be concealed under the mantle of professed attachment. The town of Chempoalla was, according to the account

* B. Diaz.

of the messengers, one both of considerable importance and extensive population. It would not be advisable, therefore, to venture rashly into its precincts without taking necessary precautions; for though Cortes was confident as to the bravery of his troops, no less than he was sanguine with respect to success, he felt averse idly to endanger the life of a single one of his followers. Should treachery be contemplated, the massacre of the Chempoallans would not indemnify him for the loss, however trifling, which he might incur in his own men. Each one of these he considered as a host in the expedition; and as, for the present, he had no prospect of augmenting the number of his soldiers, he was compelled to be watchful of the safety of that slender troop with which he ventured upon the conquest of vast and mighty regions. He therefore put those artful questions to the messengers which might lead to an elucidation of the truth; and to his great joy he discovered that the Cazique of Chempoalla, though feudatory to the Mexican empire, was impatient of its control, and ardently wished to establish his independence. He both hated and dreaded Montezuma, and a prospect of becoming free from his yoke could not but be highly acceptable to the chief. Such a discovery was most gratifying to Cortes, for it afforded a proof of disunion in the country, which he would render subservient to his designs. With this pleasing thought he kindly dismissed the Chempoallans, charging them to thank their master for his friendly disposition, and promising an early visit to their town.

CHAPTER VII.

Submission and Alliance of the Natives of Chempoalla and other Tribes.

FRANCISCO DE MONTEJO had been commissioned to survey the coast, and select a convenient situation for the purpose of fixing the Spanish colony, the present settlement being disadvantageous in every point of view. Montejo returned from his excursion at the end of twelve days, and informed Cortes of the discovery of a village called Quiabislan, or Chiatzhintzla, which possessed a commodious harbour, and was besides remarkable for the fertility of its soil. Thither the Spanish commander resolved to remove his quarters; but, mindful of the promise made to the Chempoallans, he now hastened to put it into execution, which he did the more joyfully as the step did not interfere with his plan of march, the town of Chempoalla lying in his way. Upon the arrival of the Spaniards at this place, their surprise was greatly excited at the air of comfort and even luxury which pervaded its streets and spacious habitations, no less than at the beauty of several avenues of trees in its vicinity. The meeting between Cortes and the Cazique was very cordial. The Cazique came in advance attended by his principal officers, all

dressed in rich mantles of fine cotton, and ornamented with gold. Cortes received him with much ceremony, and embraced him in token of regard. In the solicitude which the Indian showed to conciliate the friendship of the Spanish commander, the latter, with inward pleasure, discovered that he was in need of his protection. The speculating mind of Cortes soon perceived the immense advantage which would accrue to his enterprise, by having it in his power to bind this man to his cause by the strong ties of private interest. The Cazique gave him a vivid, a lamentable account of the tyranny and despotic exactions of Montezuma. He vented many bitter complaints against his oppression, and expressed his joy at the prospect of a deliverance by the aid of the Spaniards. Cortes saw the policy of indulging the hopes of his new friends; their assistance was to him a matter of importance, as, in this alliance, the reciprocity of services would, in the end, greatly preponderate in furthering his success; but yet he appeared willing to grant as a favour, what was in reality a measure of necessity.

Accordingly, he immediately assumed the attitude and tone of a protector, and with much condescension let the Cazique know, that the principal motive for his sovereign's sending him to such remote countries, was to protect the weak, and free the injured from oppression. He further promised to take measures in due time, to redress those wrongs of which he so deeply complained;* and as nothing now required a longer stay, Cortes proceeded in his march to Quiabislan. He found

* B. Diaz.

the spot selected by Montejo to be well deserving of the praises bestowed upon it, and he forthwith began to trace out the ground for the settlement of the colony. Cortes himself gave an example of industry, by carrying the materials, and digging the foundations. His officers followed his example with alacrity; every one contributed to the work, and as they were further aided by their Indian allies, in a short time the infant town rose in a state not only to offer shelter, but even defence from hostile attacks. During these transactions, Cortes was visited by the Caziques of Chempoalla and Quiabislan, who neglected no opportunity of describing the horrid acts of tyranny committed by Montezuma, especially in the territories of the Totonacas, where a great number of the men had been sacrificed to his cruelty, and of the women to his lust. In one of these interviews, it was announced that five Mexican collectors had arrived to exact the usual tribute. These officers appeared in great ceremonial, and, without bestowing the least notice on Cortes, sent a haughty summons to the Caziques, whom they harshly reprimanded for their neglect of duty in having befriended the strangers in direct violation of the Emperor's commands. Then, after threatening the offenders with their master's indignation, they made a formal demand of twenty men and women of their tribes, to be offered as an expiatory sacrifice for the guilt of the Caziques.

The consternation of the Indian chiefs at this exaction was shown in the most lively manner, yet they scarcely durst disobey the orders of a monarch, the mention of whose name filled them with alarm. Cortes, perceiving their pusillanimity, and,

on the other hand, well aware that they would be overjoyed to see a catastrophe averted, which they themselves had not the courage to prevent, ordered his own men to arrest the collectors, and issued a proclamation, that no tribute should in future be paid to Montezuma. This vigorous measure aroused the energy of the Caziques, and, as it is natural in rude and weak minds, they suddenly passed from one extreme to the other. Those very men who, a short time before, shuddered at the idea of openly opposing the commands of their master, were now emboldened to lay violent hands on the very persons intrusted with the execution of them. The boundaries of awe once broken, those who have been most timorous and oppressed, are the foremost in indulging a spirit of defiance and revenge. In this ebullition of rage, the Caziques now seriously resolved to sacrifice the collectors to the gods; and indeed this horrid doom would have been inflicted, had not Cortes interposed a timely prevention. He caused the intended victims to be placed under the safeguard of his own soldiers; and in order to impress those simple beings with an opinion of his benevolence, he even facilitated the escape of two. On the other hand, his temerity in thus defying the vengeance of so great a monarch as Montezuma, made the natives to consider the Spaniards as *teules*, a title which they bestowed on their idols. The Caziques of Chempoalla and Quiabislan had now compromised themselves beyond the power of retreat. They were fully sensible that they had incurred, by their conduct, the vengeance of their master, and their uneasiness grew in proportion to their knowledge of that monarch's disposition. Overawed by the

prospect of his resentment, they now turned to Cortes for protection and advice. They represented Montezuma as ready to overwhelm them with his numerous armies as soon as he should receive intelligence of the treatment of his officers. Cortes endeavoured to calm their fears by promising his assistance; and the Caziques, in return, obliged themselves to support the Spaniards; and, to make this union more binding on both sides, they swore allegiance to the Spanish king, and declared themselves the subjects of his crown. A formal document was then drawn up by the royal notary of the expedition, and a solemn proclamation of this change made throughout the province. The Totonacas, who had been the most cruelly used by Montezuma, and whose fierce spirit smarted under the yoke, and thirsted for revenge, rendered themselves most conspicuous in this rebellion. The three tribes, with one accord, declared their readiness to accompany Cortes in his expedition.*

The first enterprise in which the Spaniards acted in conjunction with their new allies and fellow-subjects was against the people of Cincapacinga. The Cazique of Chempoalla having bitterly complained of certain outrages committed by the Mexican garrison in that place, Cortes marched against the town, accompanied by a troop of a thousand Indians. At his approach, however, eight of the principal men came, with tears in their eyes, to deprecate the wrath of the Spanish chief, alleging that the enmity of the Chempoallans arose from an ancient dispute concerning the boundaries of their

* B. Diaz; Herrera, Dec.

respective dominions. Cortes behaved on this occasion with his usual policy. It was his paramount interest to increase the number of his friends amongst the natives; and he therefore, instead of encouraging the vindictive disposition of the Chempoallans, or countenancing their tendency to plunder, ordered that the property of the inhabitants should be respected, and induced their Cazique and that of Chempoalla to be reconciled in his presence. This conduct of the Spanish general effectually won the people he had thus protected. Indeed, Cortes showed uniformly an admirable skill in conciliating the affections both of his soldiers and the natives with whom he came in contact. His vigilance in protecting his Indian allies from the depredations of his own followers was praiseworthy. The plunder of any object, however insignificant its value, was sure to be visited with severity on the offender. On one occasion, the theft of some fowls, in a peaceable territory, so far incensed him, that he sentenced the culprit to be hanged; and the soldier would have lost his life, but for the timely interposition of Alvarado.* By such acts of impartial justice, added to that conciliatory manner with which he was endowed by nature—by his well-ordered liberality and seasonable severity, it is not surprising that Cortes should, in a short time, gain both the respect and attachment of the Indians.

But his influence over his soldiers was still more extensive. Though strict on certain occasions, Cortes did not excite the murmurs of the Spaniards, who, in his justice to the natives, saw a

* B. Diaz.

striking security of his impartiality towards themselves. Nay, they had already seen strong proofs of his disinterestedness and liberality; for however he might secretly love wealth, he had the good sense to conceal such a sentiment from his followers. Though he sedulously endeavoured to inflame the avaricious cravings of the troops, he took care to appear himself exempt from those desires. His words and general conduct bespoke a soul inspired with the thoughts of more honourable pursuits; and in the dazzling blaze of glory, he seemed to lose the sight of any less brilliant ambition. Nor were these exalted considerations destitute of sincerity. Though the thirst of wealth was one of the principal motives that encouraged the Spaniards to suffer so many hardships, and undergo so many dangers, it is probable that such a passion acted on the mind of their commander in a more subordinate degree. Cortes had a soul capable of more elevated sentiments, and grasping at higher prizes. The greatness of his undertaking completely absorbed his capacious mind—the glory in which it came arrayed fired his ardent imagination, and the power it would bestow flattered his noble ambition.

The soldiers were easily induced to follow, obey, and love such a commander; a commander whose superiority over them was only discernible in the larger share he took in dangers and privations. Cortes was the first in battle, the last in providing for his comfort. His abilities were not only called to plan, but his physical powers were summoned to execute and endure. Hence he did not disdain the most humble labours, but lent himself to every toil with ready alacrity, in con-

junction with the meanest of his soldiers. Thus he daily drew closer the ties that bound him to his army, at the same time that he was adding to his strength by his conduct towards the natives. But the friendly disposition of the Indians, which had been hitherto preserved, was now threatened with serious interruption. The vast and lucid mind of Cortes did not exempt its possessor from a tincture of indiscriminate zeal in the affairs of religion. He saw with horror the human sacrifices practised in those regions, and formed the laudable desire of checking such abominations. He considered himself not only in the light of a conqueror, but in that also of a reformer and legislator. His intentions were pure, but the means by which he thought to carry them into effect were injudicious and imprudent. He employed force where he ought to have used conviction, and attacked the religious prejudices of the natives before they were in a state to comprehend the sublime tenets of Christianity.

Cortes had invited the Chempoallans to abjure their gross and sanguinary idolatry. The priests were naturally shocked at such a proposition, and used their best endeavours to arouse the people to oppose it. This resistance enraged the Spanish chief, who, in a burst of intemperate zeal, ordered his soldiers to arms, while he himself, at the head of fifty men, prepared to invade the temple. The Indian warriors seized their weapons, whilst the Cazique, divided between his regard for his allies and his horror at the deed they were premeditating, expostulated with Cortes to desist from his intention. But his remonstrances were vain; the Spaniards ascended the steps of the temple, and as

they perceived the armed Indians ready to oppose them, they seized on the Cazique, and the principal chiefs, and priests, declaring they would put them to death, should any resistance be made to their intent. This threat produced the desired effect,—the warriors abandoned all thoughts of opposition, and their idols were hurled from the altars and broken into pieces, amid the tears and groans of the spectators. Cortes then commanded that the fragments should be burnt. Upon this the priests came forward dressed in their long black mantles, their hair, clotted with blood, reaching to the ground; their ears torn and cut, and bearing all the tokens of the cruel and lugubrious functions to which they were dedicated. They then collected the fragments of their gods, and consumed them in that temple where they had recently been worshipped. The place was next washed and purified The holy cross was planted on the altar where lately the idol stood; and mass was solemnly celebrated by Father Bartholomew de Olmedo.*

The Spaniards had already spent three months in New Spain, and many of the warriors began to evince symptoms of impatience for martial achievements. The works at Villa Rica had been nearly brought to a conclusion, and officers and soldiers proposed eagerly to their general to lead them instantly to Mexico. Cortes was as ardent as any of his followers to pursue the enterprise; yet, like a sagacious commander, far from compromising success by premature haste or unbridled impetuosity, he had judiciously employed his time in paving the way to fortunate and permanent results. But not-

* B. Diaz.

withstanding the favourable issue which had hitherto attended his transactions, there was still a thought that clouded his mind, and seemed in a degree to disconcert his plans of operation. The image of Velazquez stood constantly before his sight. He was therefore desirous, before he entered into a career of war against the Mexicans, to provide for any danger from the Governor of Cuba. For this purpose, he was anxious that his expedition should proceed under a royal sanction. These ideas he communicated to his principal adherents; and after a short consultation, it was resolved, that an embassy should be sent to Spain, in order to justify any irregularity in the conduct of Cortes, as well as to give an account of his proceedings, and future plans of operation. But in order to soften the first, and win the approbation of Don Carlos to the latter, it was further determined to send a present to the Emperor of all the treasure which had hitherto been collected. Ordaz and Montejo were employed in canvassing the approbation of the soldiers to this measure, Cortes himself judiciously abstaining from a task in which it would appear that his own interest was principally concerned.

The project of despoiling a body of needy adventurers of the first-fruits of their labours, and that, too, that they might be transmitted to a sovereign from whom they had neither received any assistance, nor expected any reward, was one, indeed, which, in the eyes of common reason, would bear the stamp of folly; yet, singular to state, that spirit of romance which characterised the whole conquest of Mexico, was in this proceeding most strikingly displayed. The soldiers generously con-

curred with the wishes of their chief, soothing their present sacrifice with the splendour of future hopes; and every one gave up his claims, not only without a murmur, but with joy, when it was stated that such a step was conducive to the public good. The Junta of Villa Rica addressed a letter to the Emperor to justify themselves for acting independent of Velazquez, as well as for the nomination of Cortes to the supreme command. In this letter, nothing was omitted which could tend to advance the cause of the writers in the Spanish court. A warm encomium was passed on the merits of Cortes, and a pompous description made of the conquests they were to achieve under his guidance. The extent of the country—its vast population—its climate—the fertility of the soil—the richness of the productions—every thing was mentioned in terms of admiration. The letter ended by earnestly supplicating the sovereign to confirm the nomination of Cortes; and that no requisite might be wanting to the document, it was corroborated with the signatures, not only of the Junta, and all the officers, but even with those of many soldiers. Cortes himself penned also a dispatch, giving a minute account of his proceedings, and artfully placing them in the most favourable light. He described the country in the same emphatic strain with his friends, and spoke of its reduction in terms of perfect confidence. Portocarrero, a zealous friend of Cortes, and Montejo, who had been gained by that chief's liberality,* were intrusted with the discharge of this important mission; which had injunctions not to touch at Cuba in their voyage to Spain, under any consideration.†

* B. Diaz. † B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cortes destroys his Fleet, and resumes his March.

WHILST Cortes was thus providing for his future security, this was imminently threatened in a manner totally unexpected. A plot was formed by some soldiers and sailors, to seize upon one of the vessels and sail instantly for Cuba, with the intention of informing Velazquez of the transactions at Villa Rica, and thus enabling him to intercept Portocarrero in his passage to Spain. This conspiracy was so artfully planned, and so religiously kept secret, that its discovery was only made a few hours before it was to have been executed. Coria, one of the conspirators, was proceeding to embark, when, either alarmed at the idea of detection, or repenting his treachery, he suddenly turned short, and hastened to acquaint Cortes with the premeditated flight. Not a minute was lost in providing a remedy for the evil. Cortes, with the utmost vigilance and secrecy, surprised the conspirators, all assembled in the vessel, and ready for departure. The unexpected appearance of the commander intimidated the traitors, and they neither attempted to deny nor to exculpate their crime. Cortes had the culprits seized and tried without loss of time; and as their offence admit-

ted of no doubt, the punishment followed close upon the discovery. Escudero and Centeno, the principal promoters of the scheme, were immediately put to death. Umbria, a pilot, had one of his feet cut off, and a couple of sailors received two hundred lashes. The rest were pardoned by Cortes, whose policy counselled him to be as economical as possible of the lives of his men.* He was easily induced to admit the plea of example and bribery as sufficient to excuse their offence. And thus, by a mixture of severity and benevolence, he thought to keep the unruly in due subjection.

But this event was to Cortes a source of deep disquietude. It gave him a convincing proof that the flame of disaffection was not completely extinguished amongst his followers. Secret machinations were still carried on, which, though not sufficient in strength to overturn the power of Cortes, might greatly contribute to weaken his resources. His prudence and vigilance, added to the kind influence of fortune, had, until now, successfully extricated him from the danger of domestic intrigue, no less than from the aggression of the enemy. Yet it would but ill accord with the profound sagacity which marked the character of the Spanish commander, to rely implicitly either on his abilities or his fortune. The very suspicion of domestic treachery, however remote or inefficient, is a source of greater anxiety to a general than the most vigorous preparations from the open foe. The adherents of Velazquez, though now extremely limited in their number, had not

* B. Diaz.

lost every hope of executing their primary designs. Attempts would be renewed, which, though they might not prove successful, would still add to the difficulties, and weaken the efforts, of the expedition. It was incumbent on Cortes, therefore, to devise some plan to prevent so disastrous a calamity.

After the most profound reflection, the General perceived, that the only efficient method of avoiding any recurrence of the same offence, was to bereave his men, not only of the hopes, but even of the means, of returning to Cuba. His soldiers were inflamed with an unusual ardour for conquest. Any project, however wild, which he might propose, would neither excite their surprise, nor intimidate their courage. To conquer or to die, was a device which they would readily assume. On the other hand, those few of his followers who could not be governed by the same generous ideas, he thought to rule by the stern command of necessity. It was under this impression, that Cortes now conceived one of the boldest and most extraordinary projects that ever entered the mind of man, however daring his heart, or imminent his danger. Such was the resolution of destroying the fleet, and thereby cutting off every means of retreat. He was the more confirmed in this idea, by the conviction, that by carrying it into effect, he would considerably increase the numbers of his forces. The addition of the hundred sailors, and other men employed in the vessels, to the regular army, was an accession of strength which, however inconsiderable in the present day, was then to be esteemed of most material consequence.

From the moment this great thought dawned

upon his mind, Cortes felt eager for its execution; yet, with his accustomed policy, he was desirous that so extraordinary a measure should proceed rather from the spontaneous concurrence of his men, than from the exercise of his own individual authority. He secretly communicated his design to his friends, who, readily joining in his views, now exerted themselves to infuse the same sentiments into the hearts of the Spaniards. The sailors were gained over, partly by liberal gifts, and partly by more splendid promises, to declare aloud, that the vessels were in so deplorable a situation as to be almost useless,* whilst many of the soldiers were industriously made to reflect how considerable a reinforcement they would obtain, if a hundred men, now lying idle in the fleet, were added to the army. The scheme was crowned with the desired success. Escalante, one of the most devoted partisans of Cortes, proceeded to dismantle the ships, which being stripped of their rigging, and every article of utility, were next destroyed and sunk, with the exception of the skiffs, which were reserved for the purposes of fishing.† "Thus," says Robertson, "from an effort of magnanimity, to which there is nothing parallel in history, five hundred men voluntarily consented to be shut up in a hostile country, filled with powerful and unknown nations; and, having precluded every means of escape, left themselves without any resource but their own valour and perseverance."

As nothing now detained Cortes at Vera Cruz,

* B. Diaz; Solis.

† Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Herrera; Solis.

he resolved to indulge his ardent spirit, as well as the wishes of his troops, and commence his march towards Mexico. He assembled his forces at Chempoalla, and after mass, he made a stirring speech to his army, on the subject of the heroic enterprise in which they were about to embark. His strength consisted of five hundred infantry, fifteen horsemen, and six pieces of artillery. To this slender body were added two hundred Indians, of an inferior caste, called *Tamenes*, and whose functions were to supply the deficiency of beasts of burden. The Cazique of Chempoalla also offered a considerable number of his own troops, from which Cortes selected four hundred men, as well as forty or fifty persons of distinction, who, though ostensibly treated as friendly allies, the Spanish commander inwardly considered in the light of hostages for the good behaviour of their master.* The Cazique of Chempoalla, as well as the other chiefs, he strongly recommended to lend all their aid and assistance to a detachment of Spaniards, whom he had left as a garrison at Villa Rica, under the command of Escalante.

Hernan Cortes was now on the point of commencing his march, when he received dispatches from his lieutenant at Villa Rica, informing him, that a vessel was seen cruizing near the coast. Such intelligence was too important to be neglected by Cortes. His active mind instantly conceived that this ship might belong to some armament sent out against him by Velazquez; and accordingly, without loss of time, intrusting the command of the army to Alvarado and Sandoval, he set out for

* Clavigero.

Villa Rica, attended by a small party of horse. Cortes, on his arrival, perceived the vessel at some distance from the shore; but as he proceeded onwards, he discovered in his way four Spaniards, who were making towards him, as if wishing for an interview. These men, it appeared, had been sent on shore by Alonso de Pineda, the captain of the vessel, for the purpose of taking solemn possession of the country. One of the Spaniards was a notary, the other three were to serve as witnesses in an injunction, which the former was to make to Cortes in the name of his captain. In the discharge of his commission, the legal officer presented a document to the Spanish general, purporting, that by virtue of a royal commission, Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica, was empowered to hold jurisdiction over such districts as he might discover on the coast to the north of the river of St Peter and St Paul. To this effect Garay had sent three ships, containing two hundred and seventy soldiers, under the command of Pineda, who was at present in the river of Panuco.*

The notary then proceeded, in no measured terms, to charge Cortes not to approach the jurisdiction of Garay. The Spanish commander desired to enter into negotiation with the chief of this expedition, observing, that they were both subjects of the same crown, and toiling for the glory of the same country. But these friendly overtures being treated with unbecoming disrespect by the notary, Cortes ordered him and his attendants to be arrested. He then concealed himself with his men behind a sand-hill, in which

* B. Diaz.

these coasts abounded, where he passed the night, in the expectation that the soldiers of Garay might be induced to come ashore, and enquire after their companions, when he might surprise and persuade them to join his own army. His hopes in this respect being deceived, he next employed stratagem to effect his purpose. He caused four of his men to be attired in the dresses of his prisoners, that by their appearance on the coast, and by their signals, those of the vessel might be decoyed to the shore. A boat was soon perceived making up to the place, but, either suspecting some plot, or from some other reason, only three men landed, who were secured, the rest hastening back to the vessel. Cortes returned to Chempoalla tranquillized in mind, having little to apprehend from the power of Garay; besides, his excursion had not been wholly unprofitable, since it had procured him an addition of seven men to his army.* So insignificant a reinforcement, as well as the event by which it was occasioned, may appear of too little moment to occupy the recital of the historian, yet the peculiarity of the character of the conquest of Mexico, as well as the slender means by which it was accomplished, make it a duty to recount even such trifling particulars.

Hernan Cortes began his march on the 16th of August. By the advice of the Chempoallans, he resolved to conduct his army by the way of Tlascala, having been informed that the inhabitants of this territory were in terms of friendly union with his allies, no less than at constant and rancorous war with the Mexicans. Nothing worthy of ob-

* B. Diaz; Solis.

servation happened during the first days of the march. The army proceeded in compact order through Xalapan, Socochima, and Texotla, where they were received in the most amicable manner by the inhabitants, who were independent of Montezuma. After this the Spaniards were exposed to very severe hardships, as they had to march through a wild and mountainous district, beset with fearful precipices, and destitute of human habitations. The cold was intense; and this, together with some heavy falls of hail, and the want of provisions, which began to become inconveniently scarce, would have rendered their condition unendurable by men less accustomed to toil, or less inflamed by the spirit of enterprise and conquest. At length, as they approached the confines of the Mexican empire, the sight of the adventurers was gladdened by symptoms of a more favourable nature, for, as they arrived at Xocotlan, it appeared that they were entering into a rich and cultivated country. The principal city of this province was seated in a pleasant valley at the foot of the mountains. The temples and other buildings appeared lofty, and as they were plastered and white-washed, they produced a pleasing effect from the distance, illuminated as they were by the rays of the sun.* The soldiers thought that the place resembled the towns of their native country, and after all their sufferings they hailed the welcome sight with lively demonstrations of joy and surprise.

Cortes sent a message to the Cazique, in consequence of which he came in advance with a

* B. Diaz; Solis.

numerous retinue; but his reception of the Spaniards seemed more to be instigated by fear and compulsion, than to flow spontaneously from inclination. The troops were indifferently treated, but Cortes conceived it expedient to disguise his resentment and displeasure. The Spanish commander put several questions concerning the city of Mexico and the power of Montezuma, but the particulars which he received on the subject were of a nature to perplex a mind less capacious, and to intimidate a heart less courageous than his own. The city was described as almost impregnable, from the peculiarity of its situation, being built in a lake, and having no access, except by three causeways, each of which had several chasms which were only rendered passable by wooden bridges. With regard to Montezuma, he was depicted as a most powerful monarch, and possessing wealth so vast as to kindle the already susceptible imaginations of the Spaniards. It was further added, that his enemies were always accounted as miserable beings, devoted to be sacrificed to the Gods; and therefore that tribe was esteemed supremely unfortunate which had the imprudence to incur the Emperor's displeasure. Such accounts, however, though they could not but infuse some salutary caution into the heart of Cortes, were not sufficiently strong to make him relinquish his design. Nor did his followers, to many of whom the above particulars were no secret, entertain other sentiments, but appeared very eager to attempt the daring enterprise.*

Cortes remained five days at Xocotlan, during

* B. Diaz.

the latter of which it was perceptible that the disposition of the Cazique towards the Spaniards was considerably improved. Nor could it be otherwise, for what the impulse of feeling could not suggest, a sense of fear and awe would achieve. Every thing about their guests impressed the Indians with an idea of their superiority. To their uncultivated and weak minds it was all a subject of wonder—the fiery spirit, yet docility of the horses, the explosion of fire-arms, the dresses and weapons of the Spaniards,—nay, even a dog, which they had with them, was a matter of astonishment. But what principally struck the Cazique of Xocotlan, was the apparent unconcern with which they heard the dreadful accounts of the power of Montezuma, and he also concluded, that the men who had the temerity to despise or defy that power, must be *teules*, or deities. Cortes deliberated on the road he was to take in his march towards Mexico; when the Cazique of Xocotlan advised him to direct his course through Cholula, a rich and industrious province, where the people were much given to the pursuits of agriculture and trade, and where, no doubt, the Spaniards would meet with suitable accommodation. There was certainly much plausible reason in this; but the Chempoallan chiefs secretly dissuaded Cortes from adopting this counsel, alleging, that the Cholulans were a treacherous race; that no security could be reposed in them; and, besides, that the capital of their province, a strong and populous city, was generally guarded by a Mexican garrison. The province of Tlascala, on the other hand, the more populous, fierce, and warlike, being in a continual state of enmity with Montezuma,

and in alliance with the Chempoallans and Totonacas, the friends of the Spaniards, the Caziques of the two latter tribes counselled Cortes to take the way of that province in preference to that of Cholula.

This reasoning appeared to the Spanish commander full of good sense; and as prudence would suggest to follow the advice of those men of whose fidelity he had already received proof, in preference to that of a Cazique, who, if not actually meditating treason, had but too plainly displayed his ill will towards his guests, Cortes resolved to guide himself by the counsel of his first allies; he, therefore, ordered his troops to hold themselves in readiness for their departure to Tlascala.

CHAPTER IX.

Account of the War with the Tlascalans.

THE populous and extensive province of Tlascala, though less civilized than the Mexican empire, was far more advanced in the arts of social life than the other rude nations, hitherto visited by the Spaniards. The district was filled with large towns, generally built on high eminences, by which means the inhabitants were at once enabled to possess an advantageous situation of defence, as well as to devote the more level ground to the purposes of agriculture. In this they had made considerable progress; nor were they destitute of some notions of commerce, though they depended in a great measure for subsistence on the pursuits of the chase. This augmented the natural fierceness and independence of their character, and led to the constant and inveterate wars in which they were engaged with Montezuma. The Tlascalans had originally been governed by kings; but having been once involved in the horrors of civil contention, they had shaken off the yoke, and formed themselves into a sort of federal constitution. They divided themselves into several districts, each of which possessed its separate ruler, who received his power from public election, and

was to represent his province in the senate of Tlascala.* Such was the nation through which Cortes resolved to pursue his march in his progress to Mexico.

The Spanish General entertained the fondest expectations that the inhabitants would give him a friendly reception. Their warlike character made him suppose they could not but welcome with joy those who arrived in their territories with the ostensible pretence of delivering them from the tyranny of Montezuma. So powerful an ally as Cortes must be readily admitted into the confidence and respect of the Senate and the people. Besides, the ties of amity which bound the Tlascalans with the Chempoallans and Totonacas, was an additional circumstance to justify the most flattering hopes. Under this impression, and further to conciliate the friendly disposition of the Tlascalans, Cortes sent to announce his arrival by four Chempoallans of high rank, who accoutred themselves for the occasion in the ceremonial costume of ambassadors. These chiefs covered their shoulders with a soft cotton mantle full of knots in the extremities, and in their right hand they carried a long arrow, surmounted with white feathers, the symbol of peace, red being with them the emblem of war. The Chempoallans proceeded to the discharge of their mission, when, contrary to the general expectation, the decision of the Senate proved unfavourable to the Spaniards. The ambassadors, without any regard to their sacred functions, were arrested, and very narrowly escaped with their lives, as the Tlascalans had already

* B. Diaz; Gomara; Solis.

prepared to sacrifice them to the Gods. They, however, either owing to the neglect, or with the connivance, of their guard, succeeded in effecting their flight, and hastened to carry this intelligence to Cortes, with strong signs of terror and alarm.* They represented the people of Tlascala as decidedly hostile, and threatening not only to destroy the Spaniards, but every one who should be imprudent enough to lend them aid or assistance. To this information an awful account was added, of the numerous and valiant forces which the enemy were collecting to check the farther progress of the invaders.

A resolution so totally different from what Cortes had been led to expect, failed not to fill him with surprise. He was at a loss to decide what reasons could induce the Tlascalans to adopt this line of conduct. Various causes might have directed the counsels of these Indians. The distrust of an ignorant race, jealous of their independence, would suggest that the Spaniards were secretly devoted to Montezuma, whatever might be their professions to the tribes through which they passed. Their intended visit to the capital of that monarch, and the great number of Mexicans that accompanied them in their march, made such a supposition not devoid of plausibility. Again, the Tlascalans might cherish profound sentiments of hate and horror towards the Spaniards on account of that religious zeal which had prompted them to overturn the idols at Chempoalla and other places. They would naturally feel a desire to sacrifice the impious strangers to their offended

* B. Diaz.

deities; and this idea was further strengthened by the consideration of the small number of the enemy against whom they had to contend.

Cortes having remained eight days at Xalacingo, advanced (August 30th) into the Tlascalan dominions. As an engagement was soon to be expected, he placed his army in an attitude of defence. The standard of Castile was carried in front. The cavalry were instructed to break through the enemy's lines, and create confusion, without staying to inflict particular wounds. Cortes then, pointing to the banner, exclaimed, "Spaniards! follow boldly the standard of the Holy Cross, through which we shall conquer!" To which the soldiers answered with one accord—"On, on, in the name of God, in whom alone we place our trust!"* After a march of two leagues, the army arrived at a wall or fortification constructed of stone and lime, and well adapted for defence. This, it appeared, was a barrier which the Tlascalans had been obliged to make, in order to protect their territories from the invasion of the Mexicans.† Upon their arrival, however, the Spaniards found it deserted, either because the Tlascalans had no time to bring their forces to the place, or because they preferred to meet the enemy in the open field, where they could avail themselves of their superiority in number, with greater success and efficacy.‡ After crossing this barrier, the advanced guard of Cortes came in sight of the first troops of the Tlascalan army; a skirmish took place, which was soon followed by an action of greater importance. Upon the approach of

* B. Diaz. † Ibid. ‡ Solis.

Cortes, the Tlascalans, to the number of three thousand men, suddenly rushed from an ambush, in which they lay concealed, and discharged a shower of arrows. Despite, however, of their intrepidity, they were compelled to give way, though they effected a retreat in an orderly manner, and without evincing those extreme symptoms of terror and awe which had uniformly accompanied, in other provinces, the explosion of the Spanish artillery, and the evolutions of the cavalry.

Cortes perceived that he had now to contend with a foe far more formidable than any which he had hitherto encountered, and he was alive to the urgency of proceeding with profound caution in all his future operations. He accordingly instructed his slender army to march in compact order, and devoted particular care in the selection of the places in which he was to halt, as well as in fortifying them in a competent manner against the enemy's attacks. On the following day, Cortes met two divisions of Tlascalans, to the number of six thousand men, ready to oppose him. A second, and more furious engagement, took place. The Tlascalans rushed to the charge with dauntless resolution, filling the air with their arrows and other projectiles, and raising a prodigious uproar with their discordant yells and martial instruments; but the Spanish artillery making a dreadful execution upon their troops, they soon retreated to an eminence, from which they at length disappeared. Cortes having gained this height, discovered, on the plain below, the whole of the Tlascalan army, which had assembled in that place under the command of Xicotencatl, the general-in-chief of the republic. It was a vast multitude, extending

far and wide, and amounting to about forty thousand, ready for battle.* At first, as the cavalry could not act upon the uneven and descending ground, there was an apparent advantage on the side of the Tlascalans; but Cortes gave strict orders to his soldiers not to separate; and in this manner, though incessantly harassed by the flight of arrows and stones, he at length reached the plain below, when the whole powers of the artillery and cavalry were successfully brought into action. After a severe and well-disputed contest of an hour's duration, the Tlascalans retreated in perfect order, abandoning the field to their enemies, who were too much exhausted to attempt a pursuit. This battle (fought September 2d) was the most important which the Spaniards had hitherto engaged in, since their arrival in New Spain. The loss of the Tlascalans was very great, no less than eight of their principal chiefs being slain, and a proportionate number of the troops, though it was impossible to form a just computation of the dead and wounded, owing to the prevailing custom among the Indians of carrying away both one and the other from the field of battle—a practice which had its origin in the combined sentiments of sagacity and pity; for the Indians expected, by these means, to conceal their losses from the enemy, as well as to prevent their unfortunate companions from falling into their power, and being devoured. The Spaniards made several prisoners, among whom there were two chiefs. The loss of Cortes on this occasion amounted to fifteen men wounded, of whom only one died. He had also one horse killed, which the Indians

* B. Diaz.

carried away in triumph, and which, being cut into pieces, was distributed as a trophy amongst the different cities of Tlascala.*

After this severe engagement, Cortes thought it expedient to renew his offers of peace. A protracted resistance from these Indians was to him a source of deep anxiety, for whilst it tended to diminish his slender force, it would also be productive of more disastrous results. He was conscious that the vigorous opposition of the Tlascalans would arouse the energies of other provinces, whose fears, or less warlike dispositions, might otherwise have led them to entertain more friendly sentiments; besides, the degree of awe and superstition with which the Spaniards were considered on account of their superiority, would cease to influence the natives, so soon as an advantage, however partial, could be obtained over their enemy. Should the idea of resistance begin to spread through the New World, Cortes was sensible that his undertaking would terminate in the total extermination of his followers. Even the advantages derived from the fire-arms and the cavalry would form but an inadequate counterpoise to the vast multitudes which the natives could bring incessantly into the field. The Spanish commander, therefore, prudently judged, that his ulterior plans would depend for success more on the operations of a profound policy, than the agency of actual force. He accordingly sent his two prisoners with overtures of peace. To the friendly message of Cortes, however, Xicotencatl returned the following answer:—"Bid them proceed

* B. Diaz.

to Tlascala, where the peace they shall meet from us shall be displayed by the sacrifice of their hearts and blood to the gods, and of their bodies to our feasts."*

This horrible declaration, joined to the evidence of the Tlascalan valour and ferocity, could not be considered without shuddering by Cortes. Yet his magnanimous soul saw the urgency of affecting that composure which he could not really entertain. Had his heart afforded the least outward symptom of misgiving, the infection would easily and rapidly have spread amongst his suffering followers. He accordingly, with apparent unconcern and confidence of success, issued the necessary dispositions for another engagement; and that night was spent by the Spaniards, partly in preparing for battle, and partly in confessing their sins, and other acts of devotion. On the 5th of September, Cortes renewed his march with all his men, the wounded not being exempted from duty. The crossbowmen and musketeers were instructed to discharge alternately, so that they might keep up an uninterrupted fire; and every possible arrangement was made both for the protection of the infantry, and for the more effectual action of the horsemen. At a short distance the enemy came in sight, covering the plain to the extent of two leagues, and bearing in their deportment all the tokens of unbroken courage, and confidence of success. The vast army, composed of five divisions, each under the guidance of a principal chief, amounted to 50,000 warriors.† They were headed by Xicotencatl, whose banner was carried before him, exhibiting a large white

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

bird, resembling a spread ostrich. The conflict began, as usual, with a prodigious discharge of arrows, stones, and double-headed darts, after which the Tlascalans advanced vigorously towards the enemy, encouraging the less hardy by animating shouts. The incessant fire of the Spaniards caused a dreadful slaughter among the thick and unwieldy masses of the enemy, whilst the compact order and steady courage preserved by the small battalions, produced the best effect for a long time. Once, however, despite of discipline, the line was completely broken, and it required all the exertions of Cortes, united with extraordinary magnanimity on the part of his men, to recover their lost position. But the destruction wrought by the cavalry came most seasonably to their relief. Other circumstances also combined to make the Spaniards again masters of the field. One of the divisions of the enemy took no part in the engagement, owing to a spirit of revenge which actuated its commander, who, as it afterwards appeared, had received some affront from Xicotencatl.* This circumstance at length damped the ardour of the Tlascalans, whose terrors were further increased when they beheld that one of the five principal chiefs had fallen in the conflict. In this fierce battle the Spaniards had only one man killed; but no less than seventy, as well as all the horses, received wounds, many of which afterwards proved mortal.

Cortes, on the day following this engagement, sent a fresh message to the Tlascalan Senate, reiterating his demand of being allowed a free pass-

* B. Diaz.

age through their territories, and threatening, in case of a refusal, to involve the whole country in ruin and destruction. But the Indian chiefs, though much dispirited by their recent losses, were yet unsubdued in their resolution, and averse to the propositions of peace. Far from being unwilling again to meet their formidable foe, they were only anxious to devise some plan for attacking them with a more favourable issue than had hitherto accompanied their attempts. For this purpose they summoned their priests and wizards into their presence, and required them to declare the motives of the extraordinary events which had lately happened, and to point out the means by which such calamities might be averted in future. The priests, after the preparatory incantations and human sacrifices, announced, that the Spaniards were men like themselves, but created by the vivifying heat of the sun in the regions of the east; that during the day they were invincible, as they fought under the protection of the solar luminary, but at night, when his genial influence was withdrawn, the strangers could be easily conquered and subdued.*

This solution of the mystery satisfied the Tlascalans, and they resolved to attack the Spaniards by night, though, by so doing, they acted in opposition to their established practice in war. Xicotencatl was instructed to surprise and charge the enemy, whilst they were enfeebled by the absence of the sun. But Cortes had sufficient shrewdness to perceive the stratagems of the Indians, as well as the necessary vigilance to render them abortive

* B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.; Herrera, Dec.

in the execution. The outposts kept a constant watch, and at the first symptoms of the enemy's movement, gave the alarm. The Spaniards quickly flew to arms, and before Xicotencatl had time to approach their quarters, to his unspeakable astonishment, he perceived, that instead of finding those formidable strangers drooping like plants under the midnight air, they were ready in arms to oppose them. A sharp conflict ensued, and the moon affording a clear light, the cavalry soon routed the Tlascalans, who fled with all the signs of wonder and dismay.

This success was of the highest importance to Cortes; for it obliged the Tlascalans to entertain serious thoughts of peace. The last occurrence strengthened their former belief, that the Spaniards were really *teules*, or beings of a superior class; whilst their rage was strongly excited against the priests, by whom they considered themselves to have been grossly deceived. In this persuasion they seized two of the principal impostors, and sacrificed them in one of those temples from which they were accustomed to issue their oracles.* The people, exhausted by such constant hardships, and intimidated by such repeated disasters, began to grow clamorous and impatient; and the Senate was obliged to listen to numberless complaints. But there was another powerful reason to induce that council to suspend hostilities; and this was a peremptory message from Cortes, insisting on his former demand, and threatening the Tlascalans with instant destruction if they made the least hesitation. The members of the Senate unanimously

* B. Diaz.

agreed to enter into an accommodation with the enemy; but the general, Xicotencatl, proudly refused to give his consent to the measure, and persisted in his resolution of continuing the war. Hereupon, repeated messages were sent by both parties, and some time spent in negotiation, till at length the Senate carried their point, and Xicotencatl laid down his arms.

The Tlascalans were, however, doubtful in what manner to address the Spaniards. They could not decide whether they were to consider them as gentle or cruel beings. There had appeared a sort of contradiction in the conduct of those redoubtable invaders, which seemed to justify both these opinions. The uniform practice of releasing all their prisoners, and sending them back, not only without injury, but often with tokens of regard, together with the renewal of offers of peace at the end of every successive battle, filled the Tlascalans with amazement. The system of war carried on in New Spain was one of hateful extermination, and sentiments so different now exhibited by their new enemy, could not but impress them with a favourable idea of their humanity. On the other hand, there were striking circumstances to contradict this opinion. Cortes, having detected fifty spies, who had approached his camp by order of Xicotencatl, ordered many of them to have their hands cut off, and the rest their thumbs, in order, by this rigorous measure, at once to punish them, and intimidate their employers. The sufferers returned to their countrymen, who were struck with horror and dismay at the bloody spectacle; and this event, combined with the artillery

and the horses, made them again incline to judge the invaders as beings of a ferocious and sanguinary disposition.

This uncertainty induced the Tlascalans to employ a sort of conditional negotiation in their endeavours to propitiate the Spaniards; and accordingly they dispatched forty messengers, loaded with such gifts as would tend to conciliate their good-will, whatever might be their real character. "If you are *teules*," said one of the messengers to Cortes, "as it is related, and desire human sacrifices, take the flesh of these slaves, and eat; shed their blood, and drink. If you are deities of a benignant nature, here is a gift of incense and feathers; and if you are men, we bring you meat and bread for your nourishment."* Soon after, the approach of a great number of Indians from Tlascala was announced, and Cortes ordered all his men under arms, to receive the numerous train, which he supposed to come charged with proposals of peace. His expectations were not deceived. Four elders detached themselves from their body, and advancing towards Cortes, with marks of profound veneration offered him incense, and proceeded to declare the purport of their mission. They came on the part of the Tlascalan Senate, with overtures of peace, solemnly declaring, that the Tlascalans had been induced to take arms against the Spaniards, under the persuasion that they were the allies of the tyrant Montezuma. They concluded by expressing their compunction for the past, and their earnest prayer to put them-

* B. Diaz; Herrera, Dec.

selves under the protection of Cortes. The Spanish commander returned a gracious answer to the messengers, expressive of his ardent desire to cement indissoluble ties of union with the Tlascalan nation; and the short but desolating war with that people was thus brought to a conclusion.

CHAPTER X.

Conspiracy and Massacre of the Cholulans.

THE Spaniards entered the city of Tlascala on the 23d of September, thirty-four days after their arrival into the dominions of the republic. The reception which they met from their new allies, was as cordial as their previous animosity had appeared implacable. Nothing could be more fortunate than this timely suspension of hostilities; for the condition of the Spaniards at this period was deplorable beyond measure. The hardships to which they had been subjected during such severe service, were of a nature to damp the most ardent spirit, to break down the most robust and healthy frame. Constantly surrounded by a multitude of enemies equal to themselves in valour and perseverance, and labouring under the united calamities of excessive fatigue, want of rest, and maladies peculiar to the climate, it would appear that a prolongation of the contest would terminate either in the destruction of the invaders, or in obliging them to relinquish their enterprise. Half of the troops were on duty during the night, and even those of the soldiers whose turn it was to repose, were compelled to sleep on

their arms, that they might assume them at the first signal of danger.

Above fifty-five had already perished since the commencement of the expedition, and a considerable number were suffering from their wounds, or labouring under distempers which were natural to the climate. Cortes himself was in a declining state of health, though his dauntless mind impelled him to grapple magnanimously with the calamity. To all these disasters were added the constant anticipation of being some day taken, and slaughtered in honour of the deities of the country, if indeed such a dismal doom was not prevented by another equally fatal, from the effects of famine. Such was the lowering prospect continually present to the Spaniards, when every new day called them to a renewal of dangers, and a repetition of their miseries. It was not, therefore, extraordinary, that many of the soldiers, worn out by such a succession of calamities, should murmur and complain, nor that when they beheld the inexhaustible number of their enemies, their hearts should begin to despair. Some of them had already demanded to be led back to Cuba, and Cortes, amidst the pressure of misfortune that weighed so heavily, and under such varied forms, upon his resolution, had the additional mortification of perceiving a spirit of despondency creeping among his followers.

His perseverance was now put to a hard trial, but his self-possession did not desert him for a moment in so critical a juncture. He endeavoured to impress the soldiers with an idea of the superiority they possessed over the enemy, and cheered them with the prospect of prompt ame-

lioration in their condition. Fortunately the surrender of the Tlascalans, the entry of the conquerors into the city, and the sudden exemption from hard service and constant danger, came in time to check the progress of the growing evil, and to restore to the Spaniards their wonted resolution. The prospects of the adventurers were now completely changed; from the abyss of despondency, they were suddenly elevated to the height of hope and confidence. The exertions of Cortes in conciliating the Tlascalans were attended with the most fortunate results. The natives, with singular inconstancy of mind, quickly passed from the extreme of hate to that of enthusiastic admiration. They fancied the Spaniards to enjoy a celestial origin, and every thing about them was a subject of wonder and praise. The horses were objects of special and extraordinary astonishment. They supposed them to be monsters, making one with their riders; and even when their error was exposed to them, they still persisted in their opinion that they devoured men in battle, and that their neighing was their call for prey.* The Tlascalans became truly devoted to their new guests, and not only were they eager to show obedience to their instructions, but invariably evinced a sincere desire to anticipate their wants.

This favourable disposition in the natives encouraged Cortes to address them on the subject of religion, and rescue them from their cruel idolatry. But the Tlascalans were tenacious in preserving those religious tenets which had been professed by their forefathers. They were ready to

* Herrera, Dec.

admit the power of the God whom the Spaniards worshipped, but, on the other hand, they contended for the glory of their own. The zeal of Cortes obscured the brightness of his reason, and, adopting a menacing attitude, he began to contemplate a scene similar to that which had marked his sojourn at Chempoalla. Fortunately he was dissuaded from this rash attempt by the remonstrances of the good Bartholomew de Olmedo, who, with as much prudence as Christian charity, represented to him the want of policy as well as justice of such a proceeding. He further added, that his heart had never approved the violent measures taken at Chempoalla. The light of religion was to be diffused by persuasion, not by the sword. Where compulsion influenced the decision of the natives, conversion could not be sincere, and it would be of no avail to demolish their false gods, if their hearts persisted in entertaining a belief in their idolatry. Alvarado, Velazquez de Leon, and Lugo, joined their expostulations to the prudent words of the worthy priest; and Cortes was persuaded to desist from his intention.* However, this event was not unproductive of some beneficial results, for it led to the liberation of a great number of wretches who were kept in the temples, confined in cages, for the purpose of being fattened, that they might offer fit objects for their sacrifices on grand festivals and days of state.†

The Spaniards being now restored to their full vigour by their timely sojourn at Tlascala, Cortes determined to resume his march towards Mexico. Great uncertainty, however, ensued with regard to

* B. Diaz. Clavigero.

the road he was to take. The Mexican ambassadors strongly recommended him to proceed to Cholula, a considerable town, where arrangements had already been made for his accommodation; but the Tlascalans as earnestly dissuaded Cortes from following this advice. They represented the Cholulans as a perfidious people, and wholly subservient to the will of Montezuma. Cortes nevertheless resolved to march to that town, partly to please the Mexican ambassadors, whose good graces he had assiduously toiled to gain, and partly to show the Tlascalans that he stood in as little awe of concealed as of open enemies. The Spanish army was besides considerably strengthened by a reinforcement of 6000 Tlascalans, and in case of some secret plot, Cortes relied with implicit confidence on his sagacity and prudence, which he considered more than adequate to the rude contrivances of the Indians.

Cholula was a place of highest veneration amongst the Indians. Their superstition had induced them to consider the town under the special protection of their gods; hence it was the resort of many pilgrims, who came to pay their devotions at the sanctuary of Quetzalcoatl, a divinity with whom a very important feature of the Mexican mythology was connected. His temple was considered the first in importance, and claimed precedence over the principal one of Mexico. On which account, the sacrifices therein performed were as numerous as they were frightful. It was an article of the Indian faith, that, by razing the wall of this temple, secret springs of water would burst, and copious rivers begin to flow, in such

a manner as to produce a general inundation.* It is more than probable that this persuasion actuated Montezuma in desiring the Spaniards to enter Cholula, where he expected the gods would dreadfully visit on those strangers their numerous and daring profanations.

As Cortes approached the town, the principal chiefs and priest, carrying censers in their hands, and attended by musical instruments, came in advance to meet him. They, however, with marks of profound respect, informed the Spanish commander, that though they were willing to admit the Spaniards and the Totanacas into their city, the same privilege could not extend to their ancient and bitter enemies the Tlascalans. To this arrangement Cortes offered no opposition, and instructing his allies to remain encamped in the vicinity of Cholula, he entered that place with the same ceremonies and tokens of wonder which had characterized his former entry into Tlascala. But the show of cordiality testified at first by the Cholulans soon began to change, and the symptoms, that some secret plan was in contemplation, could not escape the active eye of Cortes. He began seriously to entertain thoughts that the Tlascalans had not deceived him in their accounts of the perfidy of the Cholulans. By degrees the provisions supplied began to grow more scarce, until they totally failed, and the Spaniards had nothing but wood and water provided for their entertainment. But this was not the only evidence of secret machinations. Other proofs more striking and convincing were soon brought to light. Some of the Chem-

* Torquemada; Clavigero.

poallan allies came secretly to Cortes, and informed him that they had discovered several pitfalls and trenches dug in the streets adjoining the Spanish quarters. These traps, apparently to disable the horses, were slightly covered over with earth, and armed with sharp stakes, on which the intended victims might fall transfixed. To this intelligence was soon added other evidence of a still more alarming description. Several of the Tlascalans introduced themselves disguised into the city, and apprised Cortes that they had observed a vast number of women and children hastening away from Cholula in the night, laden with valuable articles, which event could not be accounted for but on the ground of some impending commotion. They further added, that six children had been sacrificed in the principal temple—a sure token that the Cholulans meditated a warlike undertaking. Besides, it was also discovered that intrenchments had been formed in some of the streets; and stones, and other missiles, collected on the summits of the temples. But the evidence which most powerfully weighed on Cortes, and changed his suspicions into certainty, was the information brought by the faithful Doña Marina.

By a most fortunate event, the beauty, spirit, and numerous accomplishments of this extraordinary female had excited the regard of a Cholulan lady of high rank, who resolved to make an effort to save her from the ruin with which her friends were threatened. To this effect she disclosed to her the mysteries of the deep conspiracy: That 20,000 Mexicans were ready at a short distance from the city, who, in conjunction with the Cholulans, had concerted effectual measures for the to-

tal massacre of the Spaniards. Doña Marina lost no time in bringing this intelligence to Cortes. Her sagacity and attachment were strongly exemplified on this occasion, by the manner in which she won every secret from her Cholulan friend, pretending to follow the Spaniards by compulsion, inducing her not only to disclose the diabolical plot, but to exert her utmost endeavours in the investigation of its trammels. Some of the chief priests were then arrested, and awed by the conviction that the Spaniards were really *teules*, since they could thus discover such secret machinations, they confirmed, by their depositions, the existence and progress of the conspiracy. Every doubt was now removed, and Cortes reflected with a shudder on the danger that had menaced both him and his companions.

His mind was perplexed how to proceed in this important juncture. A measure of the utmost rigour suggested itself as the only one fitted for the present trying occasion. The profound refinement of the treason made him abhor the duplicity of the Cholulans; its atrocious extent kindled in his heart the flame of fierce indignation. But when the first ebullition of passion had subsided, a degree of sombre horror pervaded his reflections. The moment was arrived when a fearful and sanguinary expedient was to be adopted, both to punish the present treachery, and prevent a repetition of it in future. He resolved, therefore, by a dreadful retribution, to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies, and by the image of a frightful catastrophe to arrest the progress of Montezuma in the fabrication of new plots. Unwilling, however, to proceed to so momentous an affair with-

out the advice and concurrence of his officers, he instantly proceeded to unfold the awful danger by which they were surrounded. Some were of opinion that the catastrophe should be averted by a speedy retreat to Huexotzinco or Tlascala, but the majority referring themselves to the determination of their general, Cortes resolved to carry his design into execution.* He accordingly ordered his Tlascalan allies to storm the city at the dawn of day, and that, showing only mercy towards the women and children, they should inflict a promiscuous doom on the rest of its inhabitants.

Cortes then signified to the Cholulans that it was his intention to resume his march on the following day. This intelligence filled these Indians with a strong delight, which they could not disguise in their looks and deportment. They conceived themselves now secure of their prey, and already gloated in the anticipated destruction of their enemies. At the break of day, therefore, the chiefs and about forty Cholulans came into a sort of square or court in the Spanish quarters, which was to be in a short time the scene of a frightful tragedy. A considerable number of the Cholulan troops also burst into the square in expectation of a result very different from that which was to follow. Cortes mounted his horse, and proceeded to address them in a calm but severe tone, reproaching them with the blackness of their treason, and the extent of their guilt. He knew all their contrivances, and was fully acquainted with their designs. The Spaniards had

* Clavigero.

entered their city under the safeguard of proffered friendship—they had not by one single act rendered themselves liable to the hatred or the revenge of the Cholulans. Their conduct had uniformly been that of peaceable guests, not that of insolent conquerors. So far from contemplating aught against the security of their city, or the property of its inhabitants, they had shown themselves solicitous to preserve both by all the means in their power. They had accordingly, in compliance with the request of the Cholulans, prohibited the Tlascalan allies from appearing in the city—a request which, it now became evident, had only been made with the intention of depriving the Spaniards of the assistance of their friends. "If," added Cortes, "you had a natural aversion against men from whom you have received no wrong, why not oppose us manfully and bravely in the field like the Tlascalans, instead of resorting to means so cowardly and so treacherous, to display your animosity, and effect our destruction? The victory which your false deities have promised you is beyond their power. The bloody sacrifices which you expected to offer up to them cannot be accomplished, and the effects of this dark plot will only be to turn the intended ruin against the guilty heads of its contrivers." *

The chiefs, astounded and intimidated, endeavoured to excuse their conduct by a declaration of the orders they had received from Montezuma. Cortes, however, would not accept this excuse, but ordered a musket to be fired, which was the signal for the punishment of the Cholulans. Here-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

upon the Spaniards fell on their victims, and the place became in a moment a scene of horror and confusion. A vast number were slaughtered on the spot, whilst many others, who succeeded in effecting their escape from this horrible catastrophe, soon met with another equally appalling, either in the streets, or in the temples of their fated city. The Tlascalans now rushed against the town with the most unequivocal symptoms of their sanguinary intentions. Instigated at once by their ancient quarrel with the Cholulans, and eager to signalise their zeal in the cause of their allies, they hurried through the streets like frantic demons, cutting down whatever they met in their fierce and destructive course. The citizens, appalled at so unexpected an attack, and undecided what step to adopt, betook themselves to flight; whilst others, less dismayed or more desperate, assembled in various places to check the career of their destroyers.

Meantime, the Spaniards sallied from their quarters, and began to make fearful havoc with their artillery, which kept up a constant fire, sweeping down the affrighted Cholulans, and encumbering the streets with their lifeless remains. Some of the inhabitants, in despair of averting their fate by human means, had now recourse to their superstitious belief. They considered the moment arrived, when it became necessary to raze the walls of the temple of Quetzalcoatl; and they instantly applied to the task in the flattering expectation that the city would be deluged. But when they perceived the total failure of this expedient, their dismay increased, and they yielded almost to despair. Some, in the intensity of agony, en-

deavoured to fortify themselves in their houses—others flocked to the temples to implore the pity of the gods, and exert their last efforts, as they supposed, under divine protection. Many of the houses were now in flames, and the work of slaughter continued, amidst the piercing cries of the victims, and the fierce exclamations of their destroyers. Cortes summoned those who had made themselves strong in the temples to surrender. They treated the summons with fierceness and scorn; on which the Spaniards proceeded to storm those last sanctuaries of superstition and despair.

The attack was furious, and its effects became too soon apparent. The entrances were obstructed with the dying and the dead. The towers were involved in a conflagration, produced by the flaming torches which the Indians hurled, with fatal certainty, to the intended spot. The streets were covered with bloody and half-burnt corpses, whilst the cries of agony, and the confusion that pervaded that scene of desolation, made of the whole city a spectacle of unparalleled horror. It was a striking evidence of inveterate purpose, that of all the Cholulans who had fled to their temples, only one surrendered alive to the Spaniards—all the rest chose rather to perish in the flames, or, by precipitating themselves from the high towers, to be dashed in pieces.

In this frightful slaughter above six thousand lost their lives, and the city presented a mournful spectacle of depopulation. The Spaniards and Tlascalans, when the work of death was ended, began to ravage and plunder the dwellings of the Cholulans, and the temples of their gods. The latter evinced such determined animosity in their

conduct against their ancient enemies, that Cortes was obliged to interpose his authority to check their frantic rage. The dreadful spectacle which Cholula now presented awoke sentiments of pity in the heart of the Spanish commander. He issued a proclamation, inviting the fugitives to return to their habitations, and promising pardon to all those who had escaped the preceding devastation. He likewise desired Xicotencatl, who had suddenly appeared near the city, at the head of twenty thousand men, to withdraw from the place, his assistance being no longer necessary. The women and children, who were wandering in terror in the mountains, gradually returned to Cholula. Many unfortunates began to issue from obscure corners and lurking places, whilst many others started from the heaps of corpses, where they lay apparently dead. Cortes then ordered the Tlascalans to release their prisoners, and caused a reconciliation to take place between them. He then appointed a brother of the late Cazique, who had been slain, to the government of the city, and used every endeavour to persuade the Cholulans, that he was most amicably inclined to them, and that nothing but their perfidious conduct had brought so dreadful a visitation on the city.

The massacre of the Cholulans is one of those acts which cannot be justified, but which may, nevertheless, be considerably palliated, by an impartial and candid examination of the causes by which it was occasioned. The Cholulans had not received the slightest mark of hostility or vexation from their guests, when they barbarously planned their total annihilation. Their atrocity is only to be equalled by their unparalleled duplicity. But

to the stimulus of aroused indignation, and the thirst of vengeance for the premeditated outrage, the policy, and even necessity, of the measure, became apparent to the enraged Spaniards. A signal punishment they considered indispensable, to ensure their future security; and those natives who could not be gained by the advances of cordiality, it was necessary to intimidate by the agency of terror. Such were, no doubt, the reasons that determined Cortes to perpetrate a deed which has been one of the most strongly censured in the conquest of Mexico. The provocation received was undoubtedly great, and the position of the Spanish commander truly difficult and embarrassing—yet neither the one nor the other can justify such cruel and excessive retaliation. But impartiality requires us also to declare, that the catastrophe would not have been so fearful, had not the Tlascalans assisted with a savage determination of avenging their former injuries. It must, at all events, be admitted, that the affair of Cholula was neither so excusable as Solis, the historical panegyrist of Cortes, endeavours to establish, nor yet that act of wanton cruelty which Las Cases and others, stimulated by imprudent zeal, have laboured to represent. In both cases, those historians were misled by a bigoted adherence to their own favourite systems, the former representing Hernan Cortes as a perfect hero, the latter describing the Indians as the most horribly and wantonly persecuted of human beings.

CHAPTER XI.

Cortes continues his March, and makes his entry into Mexico.

TRANQUILLITY being in some degree restored to Cholula, Cortes assembled the chiefs and the priests to a conference, in which he entered largely into his views, not neglecting to address them on the subject of religion. He flattered himself that after the inefficiency of their famous Quetzalcoatl in protecting them from the recent calamity, they would lend a willing ear to his proposal of conversion; but this was a point on which the Indians invariably showed a strong disinclination. Father Olmedo again interposed his wise counsels in dissuading Cortes from proceeding to the destruction of the idols, but he liberated the prisoners confined in the cages for the purposes of sacrifice.

Cortes having remained fourteen days at Cholula, and there being no longer occasion for his presence in that city, consulted with his officers concerning their future operations. The obscurity which involved the plot of the Cholulans, kept the mind of Cortes in a state of doubt with regard to the attitude he ought to assume in approaching the capital of Montezuma. Though

there were strong reasons to suspect that the conspiracy had been planned and ordered by that monarch, yet the solemn protestations of his ambassadors, and the reputation which the Cholulans had for duplicity, rendered it perhaps unjust to fix the odium on him. Cortes accordingly determined to affect a disbelief of his being concerned in the transaction, and sent a messenger in advance to apprise that monarch of his approaching visit. He, however, took care to inform him of the accusation in which the Cholulans had implicated him, but of which he professed his utter disbelief—especially when the crime imputed to him was levelled against men from whom he had received no injury or offence, but who, on the contrary, were advancing towards his capital in the full confidence of a friendly reception. He was a powerful monarch, and if he entertained any hostile sentiments to the Spaniards, they were convinced he would meet them magnanimously in the field, instead of resorting to mean and dastardly treason. The message closed with a declaration that the Spaniards stood prepared against all contingencies, and that they were as ready to defeat the machinations of secret enemies, as they were disposed to meet any valiant foe in the field of battle.

Montezuma was, on his side, in a painful state of anxiety and doubt. He felt an inward repugnance to allow these strangers to enter his capital, but yet dared not refuse his consent. The catastrophe at Cholula filled him with horror and amazement. His first care, therefore, was to exculpate himself from any participation in the guilt of the Cholulans; and, to remove every suspicion from the mind of Cortes, he sent him a most cor-

dial invitation to his court.* But again his repugnance to admit the Spaniards within the city returned, and thus he remained for some time in a state of uncertainty and anxiety difficult to describe. In the meantime Cortes had left Cholula on the 29th of October, and was advancing towards the capital of the Mexican empire, without encountering opposition. On the contrary, at every place he touched during his march, he was welcomed by the inhabitants as a superior being, destined by the gods to rescue them from the oppression under which they groaned. From every quarter Cortes received complaints of the arbitrary power and vexatious deeds of Montezuma; and by every person these avowals were made with that fearless confidence which the most timid assume, when conscious of addressing beings superior in power to the object of their accusation and their dread.

These tokens could not fail to produce a grateful sensation in the mind of the Spanish general. The first symptoms of disaffection he had discovered in the Chempoallans had been to him as a bright ray, at which many a fond hope was lighted, and many a glowing speculation created; but to perceive such striking evidence of discontent in the immediate vicinity of Mexico, was naturally attended with a most satisfactory presage. An empire thus disunited and impaired in strength, bore within it the evidence of its own ruin. But whilst the chief was thus indulging in the most gratifying anticipations, others of a no less agreeable nature engrossed the minds of his followers.

* B. Diaz.

As they attained the summit of Ithualco, and beheld the beautiful valley of Mexico beneath expanding gradually to their view, a crowd of hopes and delightful reveries possessed them. It seemed as though a most brilliant reward was about to crown all their past troubles and privations. The prospect that now unfolded itself was one of those which nature has exhausted her riches to embellish and adorn. As far as the eye could reach, luxurious meadows and cultivated plantations, umbrageous forests and smiling plains, extended in one beautiful and inexhaustible variety. A magnificent lake, resembling the sea in extent, and in the placidity of its waters those of a silvery stream, burst majestically on the view, surrounded with populous towns,—whilst the capital of all rose from its very bosom, its lofty temples and glittering turrets looking to the skies. The Spaniards gazed with enraptured eyes on the splendid scene, and conceived that the golden dreams of romance, the graces of fairy land, were realized in these enchanting regions.

But while the Spaniards were thus rapidly advancing towards the capital, Montezuma continued in his irresolute frame of mind. After the catastrophe at Cholula he had retired to the palace of Tlillancalmecatl, a mansion appropriated to prayer and penitential sorrow. There he remained eight days, observing a rigid abstinence, and going through a course of other religious austerities, to deprecate the wrath of the gods. From this holy retreat he dispatched four persons of distinction, with earnest entreaties to Cortes to dissuade him from entering Mexico; binding himself, at the same time, to pay an annual tribute to the King of Spain.

As a farther inducement, he promised, in case of compliance, to present the Spanish general with four loads of gold, and one to each of his followers.* Such dreadful apprehensions did this slender body of strangers infuse into the mind of the prince, that the absolute monarch of a vast and mighty empire employed every art, and descended to the most humble entreaties, when he might have overwhelmed them with his power. The messengers joined Cortes at Ithualco, and acquainted him with the wishes of Montezuma; to which the Spanish general returned the usual answer. He felt duly grateful for the favours of so magnificent a prince, but he could not retrace his steps without seeing the Mexican monarch in person, and consulting on the important affairs that had brought the Spaniards into regions so distant from their own.

The disquietude of Montezuma grew now to a painful excitement. The priests contributed to augment the turmoil of his mind by the relation of certain ominous dreams, and other superstitious signs which had recently taken place. The perturbation of the Mexican sovereign became at length so tormenting, his fears were so painfully excited, his thoughts so various and perplexing, that, without waiting for the issue of the last message, he called to council his brother Cuitlahuatzin, the lord of Tezcuco, and a few others of the principal magnates of his empire, to deliberate what course he was to adopt. The opinions given were precisely those which he had received in all his previous consultations. His brother strenuously opposed the reception of the Spa-

* Clavigero; B. Diaz.

niards, whilst the lord of Tezcuco as powerfully advocated a contrary resolution. In this dilemma Montezuma, who had uniformly inclined to the advice of the former, suddenly embraced the counsel of the latter; he accordingly commissioned that personage to meet the Spanish general, and to compliment him in his name. He, however, gave him also instructions to dissuade that chief from his intention, should an opportunity offer, with any probability of success.

The lord of Tezcuco proceeded to his embassy with great pomp and ceremonial. He caused his approach to be announced by four noblemen. These messengers informed Cortes that Cacamatzin, lord of Tezcuco, and nephew of the great Montezuma, was approaching; and they supplicated him to wait his arrival. Soon after Cacamatzin appeared, carried in a splendid litter, ornamented with jewels, and a profusion of green feathers shooting from branched pillars of gold. This magnificent conveyance was borne by eight persons of distinction, who assisted the lord of Tezcuco to alight, and then carefully swept the way as he advanced towards the Spanish chief;* a brilliant retinue of the Mexican and Tezcucan nobility closed the procession. The Spaniards were astonished at the splendour of the sight, and they could not but entertain the most extraordinary idea of the wealth and opulence of Montezuma, when they reflected on the gorgeous train that accompanied his nephew. Cortes received the illustrious ambassador with every token of kindness and respect. Civilities were mutually

* B. Diaz.

exchanged, and, after a short interview, these personages separated, the Mexican to report the unbending resolution of the strangers, and the Spaniard as fixed as ever in his intention of entering the capital.

The fluctuating state of Montezuma's mind continued, and Cortes was already near the causeways that led into the city, before the anxious monarch had ultimately decided whether he should welcome the Spaniards as friends, or oppose them as enemies. Cortes, however, proceeded in his march unmindful of this irresolution; but though he affected the most cordial regard for the prince he came to visit, as well as the persuasion of an equally favourable reception, he nevertheless ordered his plan of march with the greatest order and discipline, nor had he been negligent in adopting every measure of precaution. Proceeding along the causeway of Iztapalapan, the Spaniards arrived at a place called Xoloc, where the principal road to Mexico and that to Cojohuacan meet. At the angle formed by these roads, and about the distance of half a league from the capital, there stood a bastion, crowned with two towers, and surrounded with a wall above ten feet in height. This place became afterwards memorable as the camp of the Spaniards, when they laid siege to Mexico. In this spot a vast concourse of people were collected to witness the arrival of those extraordinary beings, who had spread such sensations of wonder and alarm throughout the country. Here also Cortes made a halt, to receive the compliments of a numerous train of Mexican nobles, all attired in their richest dresses, and who, as they passed be-

fore the Spanish commander, made a profound bow, touching the ground, and kissing their hands.

After this ceremony, Cortes continued his course still in uncertainty, and in the same manner as if he were advancing against an enemy. As he drew near the city, however, it was announced that Montezuma was approaching; and soon after the procession came in sight. Three officers appeared first, each holding a golden rod, which they lifted on high at intervals, and by which the people were informed of the presence of the sovereign, and invited to prostrate themselves in sign of respect and veneration. Montezuma was borne in a magnificent litter, covered with plates of gold. This was carried by four nobles on their shoulders, whilst a splendid canopy of green feathers, richly adorned with precious stones and golden fringes, offered a shade to the mighty monarch. He was attended by 200 noblemen, splendidly attired in rich mantles of cotton, and bearing large waving feathers on their heads. They marched two by two, at a respectful distance from Montezuma, their feet bare, their eyes fixed on the ground, and evincing every token of profound veneration. The Emperor was attired with great magnificence. Suspended from his shoulders hung a mantle profusely covered with gold and gems. He wore a thin crown of the same metal, and gold buskins on his legs, studded with precious stones. When he drew near Cortes, he was lifted from his litter, and borne for a short space on the arms of the Lords of Tezcuco, Iztapalapan, Tacuba, and Cojohuacan. Cortes dismounted, and came forward in an attitude of profound respect. Montezuma then leant on the arms of the Lords of Tezcuco and

Istápalápan, whilst the other nobles spread cotton mantles on the ground, that so great a king might not touch it with his feet. Cortes addressed him with deep reverence, after the fashion of Europe; which compliment Montezuma returned by touching the ground and then kissing it, according to the manner of the country. Cortes then approached him, and threw around his neck a thin collar of gold, on which were strung glass beads of different kinds. The monarch received this attention with gracious affability, but when the Spaniard made a movement to embrace him, the nobles respectfully held him back, considering this too great a liberty.*

A prodigious multitude had assembled to witness this extraordinary meeting; not only were the causeways and streets filled with the crowd, but the doors of the dwellings, the windows, and even the tops of the buildings, were thronged with men, women, and children, who, with wondering eyes, beheld the ceremony, yet could scarcely believe it to be a reality. The complaisance and respectful behaviour of Montezuma towards the strangers, filled the Mexicans with astonishment. They naturally concluded that those must certainly be *teules*, to whom so haughty and powerful a monarch condescended to show such strong marks of his regard. This persuasion greatly contributed to elevate the Spaniards in their opinion; nor were the strangeness of the attire, the arms, horses, artillery, and every object which they observed, calculated to dissipate the delusion. On the other hand, the surprise and admiration of the Spaniards

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

were powerfully excited on whatever side they chanced to turn their eyes. The vastness of the lake in which the city was built—the grandeur of that city itself—the beauty of the buildings—its numerous population—and the signs of wealth everywhere discoverable, all tended to impress them with a sensation of wonder and delight.

Yet such feelings were united with others of a very different tendency. Reflecting on the immensity and power of that empire, into the capital of which they were now entering, many of the Spaniards could not entirely dispel a sentiment of dread at the temerity of their present enterprise. Four hundred and fifty men fearlessly plunged into the middle of a vast city, filled with a warlike people, of whose friendly disposition they could only entertain an equivocal opinion; and this city, being built on an island in the middle of a lake, was approachable only by long causeways, intersected by various apertures—the small bridges thrown over which could, in a moment, be removed, and by this means totally preclude the possibility of a retreat. The recent plot meditated at Cholula came also to strengthen doubt, and create alarm. The uniform repugnance of Montezuma to see the Spaniards, and the repeated warnings which the latter had received during their march, were likewise calculated to confirm any sentiment of distrust and fear. Nevertheless, a handful of men, in contempt of such obstacles, willingly placed themselves in a situation replete with danger.

Cortes and his companions, after marching the space of a mile and a half within the city, were conducted to a large mansion, prepared for their reception. This was a vast palace formerly inhabited

by King Axajacatl, and was situated at a short distance from the western entrance of the principal temple. The habitations were spacious and convenient, so that not only the Spaniards, but their Indian allies, found the most ample accommodation. Montezuma took Cortes by the hand, and conducted him to a large hall, covered with tapestry, embroidered with gold and gems, in a fanciful and effective manner. He then took his leave, saying, "Malitzin, you and your companions are now in your own house; refresh and repose yourselves until my return."* When Montezuma had withdrawn, the first care of Cortes was to examine his quarters, and take every precaution for the security of his followers. He began by firing a volley of all his artillery, with the view of intimidating the Mexicans, after which he applied himself to put the place in a state of defence. He disposed a battery in front of the gate, distributed his guards in different situations, and issued orders, that every thing should proceed as if the Spaniards were facing the camp of an enemy, rather than enjoying the hospitality of a friend.†

Montezuma having taken his meal in his own palace, returned to the Spanish quarters, with the same pomp and attendance that had marked his first meeting with Cortes. He brought splendid presents, which he bestowed on the Spanish general and his followers, and which served to establish both the generosity of the donor and the wealth of his empire. A long conference then took place between the monarch and his illustrious

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Herrera, Dec. 2.
† B. Diaz.

guest. In this Montezuma fully exposed his views and opinions concerning the Spaniards. He entertained no doubt that they were the men destined by the gods to assume the government of the country, for it was not many years since his ancestors came from the region of the north, and only ruled those dominions as the vicegerents of Quetzalcoatl, their great god and lawful sovereign.* Cortes showed himself grateful for the generosity and hospitality with which he and his companions had been received; but far from wishing to undeceive the monarch with regard to the origin and predetermined destiny of the Spaniards, artfully endeavoured to keep alive a delusion so highly conducive to the success of his designs. He descanted largely on the greatness and power of Don Carlos, his sovereign and the most powerful monarch of the earth; avowing, that he came charged with the important mission of cementing the ties of alliance with the great Montezuma, as well as to use his best persuasion to alter and modify several laws and usages in his empire, which were totally contrary to the views of justice and humanity. From this he took occasion to enter into the subject of the Mexican religion; its cruel superstition, and the necessity of abolishing those frightful sacrifices which were in opposition to the most common dictates of nature and humanity. Montezuma soon after departed, commanding that nothing should be wanting towards the entertainment of his guests. The utmost cordiality prevailed in this interview, and the two chiefs separated with mutual protestations of good-will.

* Clavigero.

The adventurous and memorable entry of the Spaniards into Mexico took place on the 8th day of November 1519, and seven months after their arrival at the country of Anahuac, known afterwards by the name of New Spain.

CHAPTER XII.

Description of the Mexican Capital, &c.

The city of Mexico, or *Tenuchtitlan*, was situated upon a small island in the lake of Tezcuco, about fifteen miles westward from the town of that name, and four to the east of Tlacopan, or Tacuba. Access to the capital was obtained by means of three large causeways of earth and stone, each so spacious that ten horsemen could ride over them abreast. But besides these principal roads, there was another of smaller dimensions for the two aqueducts of Chapoltepec. Mexico measured about ten miles in circumference, and, at the most moderate computation, contained 60,000 houses. The capital was divided into four quarters, each comprising various districts, the ancient names of which are still preserved among the Indians. But if the situation of the city was singular and picturesque, the effect produced by its construction was no less remarkable. The buildings were, in general, erected upon a scale of magnificence that excited the wonder of the Spaniards. The temples of the gods, the palaces of Montezuma, and the mansions of his lords and courtiers, were large, elevated, and adorned with battlements and towers, so that it would appear

that the Mexicans thought it necessary to provide a defence even to their private dwellings. There was a vast square called Tlateloco, which served as the principal market-place in the city, and which was stocked with a prodigious quantity, as well as variety, of provisions and merchandize. On one side, a great number of slaves of both sexes were exposed for sale; another was assigned for the provisions; and here an abundant supply of fowls, game, fruits, vegetables, and pastry, were exhibited. Further were to be seen dealers in earthenware, and different wooden articles of household furniture. In fine, this vast place might be likened to a well-attended fair, so great was the number of buyers and sellers, so abundant and various the goods which it displayed.

Besides the principal market-place, there were others of smaller importance in different parts of the city; which contained, also, many fountains and fish-ponds, beautiful gardens, some level with the ground, others elevated into high terraces. Several of the streets of Mexico were broad and straight, intersected in many quarters by canals, which contributed to heighten the effect of the city, together with the loftiness and dazzling polish of the temples and other stately buildings. On the day following the arrival of the Spaniards into the city, Cortes, attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, Velazquez de Leon, and Ordaz, paid a visit to Montezuma; and the interview, which lasted a considerable time, showed a mutual exchange of civilities and cordiality. With the permission of the monarch, the three following days were appointed for visiting the capital. Montezuma, however, apprehensive that some affront would be offered

to his gods by the strangers, went himself to the principal temple, attended by a splendid retinue, and with the same ceremonial that had marked his reception of the Spaniards into the capital of his empire.* Cortes and his companions derived great pleasure at the novelty of the objects which they saw. The great square of Tlateloco excited their admiration no less for the quantity and variety of the merchandize, than for the admirable arrangement displayed, effected, no doubt, by a tribunal of three judges sitting in one end of the square, and a competent number of officers, who paraded the place to examine the articles and preserve order. Having contemplated these various objects, Cortes proceeded to the great temple, through a number of large courts, paved with white cut stones, and enclosed by strong double walls. The ascent to the temple consisted of 114 steps. Montezuma commissioned six priests to carry Cortes up; a civility which the Spanish commander declined. The summit presented a broad platform, containing several large stones, which served as altars on which the victims were sacrificed. Not far distant stood a frightful figure, bearing the resemblance of a dragon, and besmeared with blood recently spilt. Montezuma then came out from an adoratory, and desired Cortes to cast his eyes over the city, which was seen to the greatest advantage from that elevated situation. The quantity of canoes continually passing between Mexico and the numerous towns on the borders of the lake, was really surprising. The splendour of the stately buildings, the crowds moving in all

* B. Diaz.

directions, and the promiscuous buzz of the great market below, all tended to impress the Spaniards with an idea of the power, strength, and wealth of the empire which their valour or temerity had urged them on to subjugate.

Having admired the beautiful prospect from this elevated position, Cortes expressed a desire to see the principal gods of the Mexicans, which were kept and worshipped in that temple. This request Montezuma graciously granted, after a previous consultation with the priests. The Spanish general and his attendants were then conducted into a spacious hall or saloon, the roof of which was curiously carved and ornamented. Two altars, richly adorned, stood in this place, and behind them rose two colossal figures, bearing the resemblance of monstrous and unwieldy men. One of these images represented the great *Huitzilopochtli*, or the god of war, an idol held in extraordinary veneration by the Mexicans. His countenance was disproportioned, and expressive of the most terrible passions. A vast quantity of precious stones and ornaments of gold covered his body, which was, besides, encircled by enormous golden serpents. He held a bow in his right hand, and his left grasped a bundle of arrows. His neck was surrounded by a collar of jewels and little symbolical heads and hearts, wrought in pure gold. By the side of this idol was seen a small image, carrying a lance and shield, splendidly adorned. This was the page of the god of war. Before *Huitzilopochtli* stood a fire, in which Cortes beheld three human hearts burning at that moment. The feeling of horror produced by this frightful sight was farther heightened by the blood with which the

walls and floor were profusely stained, and the insufferable smell that pervaded that shrine of abomination. On the left of *Huitzilopochtli* was another monstrous image, with a countenance greatly resembling that of a bear, and having singularly shining eyes. This deity was called *Tezcatlipoca*, or the god of providence, and soul of the world.* This idol was believed to be the brother of, and divided with, *Huitzilopochtli*, the profound adoration of the Mexicans. An offering of five human hearts lay before this divinity. On the summit of the temple was kept the great religious drum. This instrument, made of the skin of a serpent, was of enormous size. When struck, the sounds which it produced were heard at the distance of two leagues, and they were so doleful, that they could not fail to excite a deep sensation of dread and terror. This fearful drum, the barbaric strains of the horns and trumpets, the fearful display of large sacrificial knives, bleeding remains of human victims, and the blood-stained altars and walls, contributed to produce an overpowering feeling of horror and disgust in Cortes; and he turned with indignation from so barbarous and terrible a spectacle.† He then addressed Montezuma on the subject, expressing his astonishment that so great and wise a monarch should be superstitious enough to adore these abominable idols, and so cruel as to permit this inhuman butchery of his subjects. Montezuma was highly incensed at this speech, declaring, that had he foreseen that this affront would be offered to his gods, he would never have allowed Cortes to visit their

* Clavigero. † B. Diaz.

sanctuary. "Go," added the indignant king, "go hence! whilst I remain to appease the wrath of the divinities which you have justly provoked by your blasphemous expressions!"*

At a short distance from the great temple there was a tower, containing an entrance always open, like the gaping mouth of a prodigious monster, ready to devour the victims that came within its reach. At this door there were several figures of idols, resembling serpents and other hideous creatures. In one part of the building were to be seen piles of wood, and a reservoir of water supplied by the aqueduct of Chapoltepec. There were also pots of water ready to boil the flesh of the victims, that served for the frightful repasts of the priests. In one of the courts stood the tombs of the Mexican nobility; in another, immense piles of human bones were curiously and regularly arranged. Every temple had its complete establishment of priests, whose outward appearance was in strict accordance with the gloom of those functions to which they were consecrated. They wore long black garments, their hair long and clotted with gore, and their ears cut and lacerated in honour of their divinities.†

It is not surprising that the atrocious abominations committed in these temples should excite the intemperate zeal of Cortes. That zeal certainly led him sometimes to depart from the line of prudence which so strongly characterised him; and accordingly he has been deeply and often too highly censured. Some authors, in their desire to

* Clavigero. † B. Diaz.

lower the glory of Cortes and his companions, have strongly dwelt on their injustice and violence towards the idols of the Mexicans. But this is precisely the worst argument they could adopt; for though it cannot be defended, that a foreigner has a right to legislate over a strange country, still violent acts are only to be judged in proportion to the positive evil which arises from them. What actual evil the Mexicans endured from an attempt to check their sanguinary abominations, let those philanthropists and philosophers who are so eloquent on the oppression of the Indians, determine. No reform, especially religious reform, was ever effected without some degree of violence. That Cortes might have employed force prematurely, cannot be denied; but while his impolicy is liable to censure, his feelings cannot be blamed, since the result of his imprudence was to his own manifest disadvantage. Had Cortes accompanied his missionary zeal with acts of personal violence, his conduct would have been unjustifiable; but, being limited only to the demolition of the idols, though it may be reprehended as intemperate, it by no means deserves the furious animadversions with which it has been visited.

Religious fanaticism was, in that age, we might say almost universal. Each creed, each sect, considered itself bound by every means to propagate its own doctrines and peculiar form of worship; and each endeavoured to signalize its zeal, not only through the medium of persuasion, but by actual force and persecution. Thus, at an epoch when Calvin was burning Servetus in Geneva, when Huss suffered in Prague, and Europe was divided

into religious bodies all hostile to each other, it ought not to excite such prodigious wonder that Cortes, at the sight of the sanguinary idolatry of America, should have evinced a violent zeal to check its cruelties, and to propagate the Christian faith.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Spaniards seize Montezuma, and lead him to their Quarters.

We would suppose that Hernan Cortes had now attained the summit of his desires. He had penetrated into the capital of a vast empire; he was treated by Montezuma with every mark of distinction and regard, and considered by his subjects as a divinity who had the terrors of thunder and strange monsters at his disposal. The success which had hitherto crowned his efforts in battle seemed a favourable omen of his fortune for the future. The devotion of his troops, joined to that magnanimity which they had so conspicuously displayed, might have induced him to consider them capable of sustaining the severest trials—of attempting the most daring enterprises. But very different sentiments occupied the mind of the Spanish commander. Though impetuous in his courage, and endowed with singular perseverance, he was neither blind to danger, nor would he wantonly despise it. When the first powerful sensation natural upon his arrival at Mexico had subsided, the dazzling splendour of the achievement did not prevent his searching eye from penetrating the cloud that bounded a future horizon. He plainly saw the perilous nature of his present situation. He was

swallowed up in the centre of a populous city, the peculiarity of whose situation afforded matter for the most alarming anticipations. By the simple destruction of the causeways, he would be caught in a snare from which every hope of escape was precluded. The Tlascalans had continually dissuaded him from reposing any trust in Montezuma; and they at last informed him, that this prince had, by the advice of his priests, permitted the entrance of the Spaniards into the capital, in order to destroy them with perfect security.* The Mexican monarch had, indeed, treated him with kindness and respect; but would he be justified in relying too confidently on the sincerity of these professions? Might they not serve as a specious mantle to cover a treacherous design? Those glittering gifts and smiling words were perhaps like the flowers that bloom on the borders of a yawning precipice, tempting the traveller to his own destruction. Even admitting that the friendly countenance of Montezuma was dictated by feeling, and directed by truth, was not this favourable sentiment liable to change, or subject to caprice? Might not a sudden gust of passion—a momentary wrong—or pernicious advice, decide the fate of the Spaniards before they had time to ward off the impending blow?

These thoughts pressed strongly on, and produced intense anxiety in, the mind of Cortes. But he had another reason to confirm his apprehensions, and make him doubt the sincerity of Montezuma. This was intelligence which he had received from the colony at Villa Rica. Quauhpopoca, lord

* Cortes, Relat.

of Nauhtlan, a city situated on the coast, and one of the Mexican generals, had received secret instructions from Montezuma to attack the rebel Totonacas, and reduce them to subjection as soon as Cortes had withdrawn from those territories. This chief accordingly began to make excursions into the various settlements of those Indians, inflicting a severe punishment for their revolt. The Totanacas, in this emergency, implored the assistance of their Spanish allies at Villa Rica. Juan de Escalante, the governor, sent a message to Quauhpopoca, requiring him to desist from his hostilities; to which the Mexican general returned an answer in no measured terms—That should the Spaniards be disposed to embrace the cause of the Totanocas, he was ready to decide the contest in the plains of Nauhtlan. Escalante forthwith took the field at the head of fifty Spaniards, two horses, two small pieces of cannon, and an army of two thousand Totonacas. These Indians, however, at the first charge of the Mexicans, were thrown into disorder, and the greater number betook themselves to flight. Escalante and his companions continued the battle with undiminished valour, despite of the cowardice of their allies. The awful sound of the artillery in a short time compelled the Mexicans to retreat to Nauhtlan. The Spaniards pursued the enemy, causing a great slaughter amongst them; but though they were victorious in the end, this triumph was not obtained without a considerable loss. Seven Spaniards, and one horse, perished in this engagement: but what added to the calamity, was the death of Escalante, who expired of his wounds three days after the conflict. A Spaniard of prodigious bo-

dity strength, having a large head and terrific countenance, was taken alive; and the Mexicans already congratulated themselves upon a capture so important for their sacrifices, when the soldier died of his wounds. His head was, however, severed from the body, and sent as a trophy to Montezuma, after being paraded through various cities, to convince the inhabitants that the Spaniards were neither immortal nor invincible. It appears that Cortes had received this disastrous intelligence previous to his departure from Cholula, but that he had kept the event a strict secret from his followers, lest it might tend to discourage them, and offer a check to the progress of the expedition.*

The circumstance was, however, a matter of deep disquietude in his present situation; for he could neither remain in Mexico without danger, nor retreat from it without disgrace. A series of events had conducted him to the capital. His own reckless valour, and the success of his former actions, had impelled him to a step which he was now inclined to consider as the result of temerity. Various trifling circumstances which, on other occasions, would scarcely have deserved his notice, now excited the most fearful suspicions. He caused some of his most devoted Indians to be secretly introduced to him, and enquired of them if they had observed any symptoms of evil purpose amongst the Mexicans. The answer which they returned was not calculated to calm his apprehensions. Though the mass of the people were described as being either occupied in the public re-

* Cortes, Relat.

joicings, or pursuing their usual avocations, yet the deportment of the nobles, as well as their looks, indicated that their minds were engrossed with some important speculation. Several of them had been overheard to say, that it would be an easy task to break down the bridges on the causeway. It was also reported that Montezuma, after having seen the head of a Spaniard sent to him by Quauhpopoca, ordered it to be taken away, and seemed very solicitous that the circumstance should be kept secret from Cortes.

The Spanish general, by an impartial examination of these various circumstances, soon concluded that his suspicions were just, and that any delay in providing a remedy against the danger would argue a blinded folly. Under this impression, Cortes retired to his apartment, where he spent the whole night walking to and fro in a mood of painful agitation.* A crowd of thoughts pressed on his mind, but he discarded them as unequal to the extremity of the present occasion. The very fertility of his genius seemed inimical to the maturing of an efficient and feasible plan, for it presented at the same time both the remedy and its dangers, which tended to perplex the speculations of the chief. His talents were now called into uncommon exertion, and his magnanimity was subjected to a rigorous trial. His heart revolted from the idea of retreat. He knew that the success of the enterprise most materially depended upon preserving that high opinion, which the Indians had formed of the superiority of his power. A slight token of irresolution, an evanescent symptom of timidity, might awake Montezuma from his delusion—encourage him to dare, perhaps

* Clavigero.

enable him to achieve, the destruction of his enemies. An indication of weakness on his part would arouse the whole empire—a single spark would kindle a general conflagration. Nothing, therefore, could obviate the danger, but a measure prompt, vigorous, and uncommon. After revolving in his mind a thousand plans, he at last fixed on one, daring in the conception, and most perilous in the execution; but which, if carried into effect, would entirely disentangle him from his present difficult position. It was nothing less than to seize Montezuma, and conduct him to the Spanish quarters.

From this desperate plan, even the powerful mind of Cortes recoiled for a moment—even his bold heart felt a shudder. He well foresaw the extremity of the danger to be incurred, and the necessary hardihood and craft required for so hazardous an undertaking. But he carefully discarded from his imagination every doubt that arose in opposition to his design. Even supposing he should fail in his attempt, and involve himself and followers in destruction, still their fate would be more glorious, and more in accordance with the former actions of the Spaniards, than any other issue they could expect from less magnanimous conduct. To be destroyed by treason, or to be cut down in a retreat, were the dark alternatives that offered themselves to Cortes; and to these he unhesitatingly preferred a glorious end, in one of the boldest attempts ever recorded in history. On the other hand, should his enterprise succeed, he knew, that in the person of Montezuma he would possess the most effectual guarantee for the subordination of his subjects. So sacred a pledge would at once render the Mexicans slow to undertake any design which

might place in jeopardy the life of their great master, and, in a measure, secure the Spaniards against their attacks.

The next morning Hernan Cortes assembled his officers, and some of those soldiers whose valour, services, or devoted zeal, entitled them to hold a place in his councils. He then proceeded to paint, in the most glowing colours, the imminent dangers of their position, the little trust which they could repose in Montezuma, and the strong reasons which they had to anticipate some treason. To corroborate this statement, he dwelt emphatically on the disastrous affair at Villa Rica, detailing every circumstance connected with it which went to establish his belief in the duplicity of the Mexicans. He further enumerated the various symptoms of inimical design, observable during the last two days amongst the inhabitants; the depositions of the Tlascalan allies; the suspicious conduct of the nobles; and the curtailment which they had experienced in their provisions.* Having explained these incidents, and expressed the fears which they naturally justified, he then in a firm, confiding tone, unfolded the extraordinary expedient which he had in contemplation. The announcement of so rash a design was followed by that diversity of thought and of emotion which Cortes had, no doubt, anticipated, and for which he came prepared. The opinions were much divided. Some considered the proposal of the general as impracticable, and certain to provoke the complete destruction of the Spaniards. Others declared it would be far more prudent and advantageous to

* B. Diaz.

take a friendly leave of Montezuma, and retrace their steps to Villa Rica. But there were also several who entertained the opinion of their chief. The impetuous Velazquez de Leon, and the faithfully-devoted Sandoval, strongly advocated the more decided measure. The debate lasted some time, and the result was, that the members which composed that singular council came to an unanimous determination of adopting the proposal of the general.

Here the mind pauses for a moment to reflect on every circumstance of this extraordinary transaction. Imagination has some difficulty to conceive how twelve or fifteen men could seriously discuss, and unanimously approve, the seizure of a mighty monarch, in the midst of his capital, and surrounded by thousands of warriors, who considered him as an object of almost superhuman veneration. But the measure being determined on, it was also judged advisable to put it into immediate execution. The arrangements which Cortes made for this attempt, bespoke at once his sagacity and the magnitude of the affair. He could not proceed to the palace of Montezuma with all his forces, without exciting a degree of suspicion which would render success unattainable; much less could he rashly venture upon a violent attack. Still a certain number of resolute and devoted men were indispensable in a case of such extremity. The selection of these men, and the artful means by which he was to bring them to the palace without awakening curiosity, or exciting alarm, next occupied his thoughts. He chose Alvarado, Sandoval, Velazquez de Leon, Lugo, and Davila, the five Spaniards of whose determined courage he had

received the greatest proofs, and in whose devotion he could repose the utmost confidence, to be his near companions in the dangers and glory of this memorable enterprise. These were to be attended by five soldiers of equally tried valour, and the same acknowledged merit.* Twenty-five chosen men were to follow, not in a body, but sauntering, and at intervals, as if they had been led to the spot by the effect of chance. The troops, both Spanish and Tlascalan, were placed under the command of Christoval de Olid and Diego de Ordaz, with strict instructions to keep themselves in readiness, and to sally forth at the first alarm.

These arrangements being concluded, Cortes and his companions proceeded to the palace, and were admitted without suspicion, as they had been on former occasions. After the first compliments, the Spanish commander began, in an austere and resolute tone, to complain bitterly to Montezuma of the conduct of his general Quauhpopoca, at Villa Rica. He expressed his astonishment that the Mexican monarch, who had always exhibited such apparent friendship for the Spaniards, should have issued orders clandestinely for their destruction. He enlarged on the ravages committed by Quauhpopoca in the country of the Totonacas, and charged Montezuma himself with having been not only privy to the treachery of the Cholulans, but its principal contriver. He added, that motives of respect and prudence had hitherto restrained him from touching upon that painful subject, but knowing now that a new plot was in contemplation

* Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the narrator of this daring transaction, was one of these.

against the Spaniards, it was his duty to adopt the most efficient measures for the security of his followers.* When Doña Marina and Aguilar explained to Montezuma the nature of the complaint and the accusation urged against him by Cortes, that monarch was thrown into terror and amazement. For some time he remained silent, as if overwhelmed by so unexpected a charge; and he changed colour, either from conscious guilt, or from a sense of the indignity offered to his person. Recovering, however, from the first emotion, he solemnly declared his innocence of the accusation; he denied having given orders to Quauhpopoca to proceed against the Spaniards; and, as a proof of his sincerity, he took from his wrist the signet of *Huitzilopochtli*—a token which he employed in cases of importance—and delivered it to one of his officers, with strict commands to bring without delay the offending general to Mexico.† Cortes affected to be pleased, and duly grateful for this determination, and accordingly expressed his conviction that so great a monarch could not have practised a vile deception; and that, in his own mind, his innocence was fully established. But he continued, in the same tone, that something else was necessary to calm the apprehensions of the Spaniards; they were alarmed, and might be tempted to some desperate act, in order to secure their safety. To convince them, therefore, that he entertained no other sentiments but those of friendship and peace, and as a proof, also, of his own confidence, it was indispensable that he should quit his palace, and re-

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.; Clavigero.

move to the Spanish quarters for some time. The mention of so extraordinary a demand could not fail to produce a corresponding sensation in the breast of Montezuma. At first he appeared deprived of speech, and bereaved of motion. He stared in vacant amazement on the man who had the audacity to make so strange a proposition; but a feeling of injury giving power to his utterance, he soon exclaimed, in a proud and indignant tone, that he would not subject himself to such humiliation—that the monarchs of Mexico were not accustomed to render themselves prisoners of their own accord—and that even in case he were base enough to comply, his subjects would never permit such a degradation! Cortes then exerted all his eloquence in explaining the necessity of this measure; he affected surprise that Montezuma should consider himself a prisoner by taking up his residence in the Spanish quarters, for he would there be treated with the same respect, and receive the same attentions, he was accustomed to experience in his court. He added, that, far from the tenant of a prison, the Mexican monarch was only to remove to one of his own palaces, even that of his deceased father, Axajacatl; and that the step, therefore, could neither excite the surprise, nor the alarm, of his subjects.* But Montezuma was neither convinced by the arguments, nor persuaded by the expostulations, of the Spanish general. He persisted strenuously in his refusal, and a considerable time was spent in fruitless discussion. Cortes perceived the danger of delay; his companions also

* Clavigero.

grew both impatient at the firmness of the monarch, and apprehensive that his subjects might collect in such numbers as not only to defeat their object, but effect their destruction. The crisis arrived. Arguments could not convince, remonstrances persuade, nor threats intimidate. In this emergency, Velazquez de Leon, an impetuous and daring young officer, cried in a resolute voice, "Why should we waste more time in words? He must yield himself our prisoner, or we will forthwith stab him to the heart! Let us secure our lives, or perish at once!"* The fierce voice and threatening manner of Velazquez de Leon powerfully struck Montezuma. He enquired of Doña Marina what that Spaniard meant by so violent a deportment; to which the sagacious female answered, with equal mildness as discretion, "Prince, I am your subject, and am anxious for your safety; but, as the confident of those strangers, I have a perfect knowledge of their character. Condescend to their request, and you will be treated by them with all possible consideration —resist their intentions, and they will not scruple to take away your life."†

Montezuma was so far overawed by the resolute manner of the Spaniards, and so intimidated by the words of Doña Marina, that he attempted no further opposition to their demand. He was aware that they had now proceeded too far to retreat; that but little time more would be lost in idle threats. He accordingly gave his consent. "Let us, then, depart to your quarters," he said;

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.; Clavigero; Solis.

"the gods have decreed it so, and I intrust myself to your honour." Cortes offered him every possible assurance of attention and respect; and the unfortunate monarch, with a breaking heart, resigned himself to his fate. But the Spanish commander carried his audacity still farther. He required of his captive to signify to his officers that he removed to the Spanish quarters, not through compulsion, but with pleasure. Montezuma having conceded the first demand, found no difficulty in complying with this additional indignity. His courtiers were summoned, and the intentions of their monarch announced. They were amazed, but offered not to question the decision of the great Montezuma. He was placed in his magnificent litter of state, and carried in silent pomp and sorrow to the palace of his father. The Mexicans, upon the first announcement of this strange event, burst into mournful exclamations and horrid threats against the Spaniards, who they imagined were carrying away their monarch. However, when he appeared in his litter, surrounded by his officers, and waving his hand to his people in token of command, the tumult was appeased, and every one silently dispersed.* "Thus," says Robertson, "was a powerful prince seized by a few strangers in the midst of his capital, at noon-day, and carried off as a prisoner, without opposition or bloodshed. History contains nothing parallel to this event, either with respect to the temerity of the attempt, or the success of the execution; and were not all the circumstances of this

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Gomara; Clavigero.

extraordinary transaction authenticated by the most unquestionable evidence, they would appear so wild and extravagant, as to go far beyond the bounds of that probability which must be preserved even in fictitious narrations."

CHAP. XIV.

Execution of the Mexican General, and Humiliation of Montezuma.

THE manner of living of Montezuma in his honorary prison, did not differ from that to which he had been accustomed in his own court. He was treated with the usual state and ceremonial, and attended by the same persons. His ministers and chiefs had free admittance to his presence, and the affairs of government proceeded as if no change had taken place. His dinners were served up with great pomp by his principal nobles, and conducted upon a scale of uncommon prodigality. Montezuma partook of some of his favourite dishes, and then sent the rest of the banquet to the Spanish soldiers. He soon became not only reconciled to his present mode of life, but even pleased with the company of his masters. He took special delight in those of the Spaniards whom he considered superior to the rest in birth, manners, and abilities. But his favourites were Cortes himself, on whom he looked with much respect, and Pedro de Alvarado, whose graceful person, pleasing address, and turn for gaiety and humour, rendered his society peculiarly attractive. With this captain and Cortes, Montezuma used often to play at

a game called *bodoque*, and whenever he gained, he bestowed his winnings on the Spanish soldiers. Cortes evinced great eagerness that the illustrious prisoner should be treated with the most profound respect; and on a certain occasion, he ordered one of his men to be severely scourged, because he uttered some rude words against that monarch. Indeed, the Spanish general used every exertion to render the confinement of Montezuma not only endurable, but agreeable; and he succeeded in obtaining such an influence over him, that the monarch actually appeared to be fondly attached to the authors of his degradation. He received permission to visit his temples, and go to the chase, with a sort of childish pleasure, and he showed a lively gratitude for this use of liberty, though in his excursions he was invariably accompanied by a strong detachment of Spaniards. Such is the ascendency which a master-mind, allied to fearless conduct, will acquire even over powerful men, and so vast the influence of habit and necessity in reconciling even the haughty to humiliation! Strange to relate, Montezuma was not only prodigal of his treasure toward his enemies, but he even bestowed upon them two of his daughters in marriage.*

But this seeming cordiality existing between the captive monarch and the Spaniards, was soon to be disturbed by a most melancholy event, which rendered the wretched Montezuma alive to the depth of his humiliation, and sensible of the extent of his misfortune. Fifteen days had now elapsed since the imprisonment of the king, when Quauh-

* B. Diaz.; Clavigero.

popoca, his son, and several other nobles, who had been implicated in the attack against Escalante, were brought prisoners to Mexico. Quauhpopoca was carried in a splendid litter, and presented himself before his sovereign, with the respectful confidence of a faithful servant who had done nothing to merit the disapprobation of his master; but, to his utter confusion, he was received with indignant haughtiness by Montezuma, and immediately delivered up to Cortes, that he might be tried, and his punishment awarded. Quauhpopoca and his accomplices were examined, and, upon being threatened with the torture, they reluctantly confessed, that what they had performed was in obedience to the orders of Montezuma. A Spanish court-martial condemned Quauhpopoca, and three other chiefs, to be burnt alive.* Cortes came to announce this sentence to the Mexican king, signifying that he had been accused by the culprits as the author of the whole transaction for which they were to suffer; that, in consideration of his late acts of kindness and submissive conduct, his life was spared, but that he should not expect that his participation in guilt should pass entirely unrequited. Upon this a Spanish soldier came forward, carrying a pair of fetters, which Cortes, turning abruptly to depart, ordered, in a stern tone, to be immediately placed on the legs of the unfortunate monarch.†

The stupefaction and horror of Montezuma at this outrage, seemed at first to bereave him of all power of sensation. He remained some time in a state of

* B. Diaz; Clavigero says they were fifteen in number.
† Ibid.; Clavigero.

apathy; but considering this indignity to his person as a certain omen of his approaching death, he at length broke out into bitter complaints and lamentations. His disconsolate attendants, in speechless sorrow, bathed his feet with tears, whilst they held the fetters in their hands, that they might by this means lessen the weight upon their unfortunate master. This extraordinary act had scarcely been executed, when Cortes hastened to perform another, still more daring and arrogant. A large fire was kindled in front of Montezuma's palace, and to this Quauhpopoca and three of his accomplices were conducted, amidst the horror and amazement of a vast multitude, overawed by the magnitude and singularity of the execution. The fuel employed on this occasion was composed of a vast quantity of bows, arrows, darts, and other weapons, which Cortes had prudently taken away from the armoury, thus to lessen the power of his enemies. Quauhpopoca and his companions were consumed in a short time, in the presence of an immense concourse of Mexicans, who beheld this doom inflicted on a brave general, by a handful of strangers, who might have been instantly overpowered by their numbers. But they concluded that this execution was performed with the sanction, and by the order, of Montezuma, and under this impression, they dared not offer the slightest opposition to the act.*

This dreadful punishment being inflicted, Cortes, attended by Alvarado and other officers, repaired immediately to Montezuma, and taking away the fetters with his own hands, gave him the

* Cortes, Relat.; Clavigero.

strongest assurances of reconciliation and attachment. The wretched monarch was so broken down in spirit, so humiliated by suffering, that, instead of repelling these advances with indignant pride, he blushed not to receive them with unmanly joy. He suddenly passed from the extreme of dejection to an extravagant pleasure, and testified a lively gratitude to Cortes for the boon of that life which was no longer worth preserving. The Spanish general, with that profound policy which was the predominant feature in his mind, now resolved to improve the extraordinary ascendency which he had, by an unparalleled series of deep schemes and daring acts, acquired over his illustrious captive. He caused his guard to withdraw, and even informed him that he was at liberty, and might return to his own mansion. This offer, however, was made with little risk of its being accepted, for Montezuma was conscious he could not at present leave the Spanish quarters without personal danger, well knowing that he had offended his subjects by his self-abasement to the Spaniards.*

The execution of Quauhpopoca, and the extraordinary circumstances with which it was attended, afford much matter for debate. It would be an arduous task to penetrate into the true motives that prompted Cortes to venture upon measures at once so perilous and wild. Completely to blame his conduct, would perhaps be as rash as readily to approve. The act in itself was cruel and atrocious, and therefore reprehensible in the eyes of humanity, but the degree of its necessity must decide how far it was excusable. Cortes was not san-

* Clavigero.

guinary by nature; and though his adventurous career presents many a rigorous deviation, upon a mature examination of the matter, not one fact will be found to be the offspring of caprice or wanton ferocity. The success which had attended the boldest attempts, encouraged Cortes to improve his advantage. It was an important point to keep alive, by every effort, that opinion concerning the origin and nature of the Spaniards which superstition and ignorance had suggested to the Mexicans. Nothing could more awfully strike the latter with the degree of guilt attached to the death of a Spaniard, than the dreadful punishment which attended its commission.

But the death of Quauhpopoca, and the humiliation of Montezuma, at length aroused some of the more brave of the Mexicans to a sense of their degradation, and awoke in them a desire of vindicating their honour. Cacamatzin, Lord of Alcohuacan, no longer able to brook the audacity of the Spaniards, and ashamed of the pusillanimity of his uncle Montezuma, summoned the nobles at Tezcuco, who, with a few exceptions, agreed to his proposal of declaring war against the strangers. Cortes became uneasy at these symptoms of awakened courage; for he well knew how disastrous and headstrong in its effects is the reaction of men once timid and oppressed. He was sensible that their resolution rises in proportion to their former apathy, and that the violence of hate is generally commensurate to the extent of wrongs sustained. Nor was Montezuma entirely at ease, for strange rumours circulated that Cacamatzin entertained the project of seizing upon that crown which the leagured Mexicans considered their present sove-

reign no longer worthy of wearing. Montezuma sent an imperious order to his nephew to desist from his designs, and Cortes also dispatched a message to forbid the haughty prince from continuing his preparations. But Cacamatzin returned a proud answer, indicative of his fixed resolution, treating the Spaniards as the enemies of his country, to whom he would not be reconciled, and by whom he could no longer be deceived or intimidated. He advised them, therefore, to leave Mexico, and retrace their steps to their own country, unless they preferred to brave the storm which was ready to burst over their heads.

Cortes, alarmed at this undaunted determination, prepared, with equal resolution, to march against the enemy; but he was dissuaded from adopting this course by Montezuma, who represented to him the vast danger and great difficulties of attacking so strong a city as Tezcuco, which was accounted the second in the whole Mexican empire. The monarch invited his nephew to proceed to the capital to an interview, when he hoped that every difference would be adjusted. Cacamatzin, however, was highly indignant that his uncle should evince more interest for those strangers, from whom he had received so many wrongs, than for his own subjects and relations, who were now preparing to chastise such injuries. He accordingly returned an answer expressive at once of resolution and scorn, vowing he would repair to Mexico, not to waste time in idle meetings, but to cancel, with the destruction of the Spaniards, the miseries and dishonour of his country.*

* Clavigero.

Montezuma was hurt at the proud and independent bearing of his nephew, whom he now resolved to make his prisoner. He accordingly gave his signet, with private instructions, to some of his nobles, to seize clandestinely his rebel nephew, and bring him forthwith to the capital. This plan succeeded; Cacamatzin was secured and conducted to the presence of his offended relative, who, after severely reprimanding the prince for his disobedience, placed him immediately at the disposal of Cortes. Measures were then taken to bestow the principality of Tezcuco on Cuitcuitzcatzin, who was soon after sent with a splendid retinue to take possession of that government which his courageous brother had now exchanged for the solitude of a prison. Thus was a storm, which so imminently threatened the safety of the Spaniards, not only averted without bloodshed by the very person whom they had reason to consider their bitterest enemy, but, what was still more fortunate, the failure of Cacamatzin's attempt tended to strengthen their power, by increasing the subserviency of Montezuma, and the superstitious terror of his subjects.

Such an accumulation of successful attempts and fortunate escapes from danger—so close and singular an alliance between courage, policy, and fortune—elated the mind of Cortes, and inspired his daring heart to proceed in this unparalleled career. He continued to direct the councils of Montezuma, and, under the sanction of his name, to exercise a complete influence over the kingdom. He had so industriously paved the way for his future plans, that he no longer hesitated to attempt the execution of a measure which he had been deeply revolving in his mind. This was the so-

lemn acknowledgment of the jurisdiction of the Spanish crown over the dominions of the Mexican monarch. He accordingly required of Montezuma to declare himself feudatory to the king of Castile, and to subject his territories to an annual tribute in token of dependence. This extraordinary proposition, the most humiliating, the most galling that can be made to an independent prince, the captive monarch had not the resolution to reject. He convened all the lords feudatory to his power, as well as all the leading personages of his kingdom. These chiefs assembled in a large hall of the Spanish quarters, where their unfortunate master explained to them, in a long harangue, the strange requisition which was now to crown his loss of liberty and independence. He recalled to their minds the traditions and prophecies concerning the reversion of the Mexican empire to the sons of Quetzalcoatl, to whom he and his predecessors had only acted in the capacity of viceroys. He then added, that from the singular circumstances that attended the arrival of the Spaniards, their greatness, and unconquerable power, he had no doubt that they were the promised race foretold in the ancient oracles. He, therefore, was ready to recognise the title of the king of Spain over the Mexican dominions, and would declare himself the tributary of that crown. Whilst unfolding this extraordinary determination, Montezuma gave evident proofs that his sense of offended dignity was not totally extinguished. Broken as his spirit was, and familiarized with humiliation, this last sacrifice was not consummated without painful tokens of its magnitude and extent. Sobs and tears frequently interrupted the monarch as he proceeded

to announce to his own subjects, that he was no longer the absolute prince they had once obeyed, but the feudatory lord of another sovereign more powerful. The chiefs and magnates of the Mexican empire listened to this declaration in silent sorrow. A suppressed murmur of resentment ran through the assembly, but the feelings of offended pride and affliction soon gave way to the suggestions of dread and superstition, and they at length acceded to the instructions of their master.

Montezuma then informed Cortes that, on the following day, he and his tributary lords would solemnly tender their allegiance to the King of Spain. The act of homage accordingly took place at the appointed time, with all those formalities which were judged necessary for the occasion. The ceremony was performed in the presence of all the Spanish officers, and many of the soldiers; all of whom, as they beheld the distress and emotion exhibited by the monarch during the act, evinced strong signs of being powerfully affected.* Cortes then testified his deep acknowledgments to Montezuma and his nobles for their submission, solemnly declaring that his king had no intention of depriving their present monarch of his dominions, but, on the contrary, that his authority would extend to those regions which the Spaniards might conquer in the sequel.

Having thus induced the Mexican sovereign to recognise the jurisdiction of Spain, Cortes's next care was to persuade him to present a contribution of gold and silver as a tribute due to the king

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.; Clavigero.

of that country. Montezuma readily acceded to this request, and, with true munificence, delivered up to his new sovereign abundant tokens of his generosity; at the same time issuing orders to all his tributary lords, to send to Mexico their quotas of the contribution. Twenty days after, all the treasure contributed by these various lords, as well as the presents bestowed by Montezuma, together with the silver and gold gathered in some excursion of the Spaniards, were collected in Mexico. The soldiers were impatient for a division; and accordingly Cortes, having caused the precious metal to be melted down, proceeded to make a distribution, which he considered in strict equity. The total sum collected, setting apart the jewels, amounted to six hundred thousand *pesos*, or dollars. A fifth of the gross mass was to be the king's share, and that of Cortes amounted to the same. A deduction was then made towards defraying the expenses incurred by Velazquez, Cortes, and others, in fitting out the armament for the conquest. The rest was divided among the army, including the settlement in Vera Cruz, according to the rank each person held. The sum, therefore, which fell to the share of each soldier, was far from answering to the sanguine expectations which they had been induced to entertain, which gave rise to many murmurs and complaints. The sum allotted to the King of Spain, who had not the least share either in the expense, or the success, the dangers, or the privations, of the expedition, appeared out of all proportion; nor was that of Cortes exempt from its concomitant censure. The portion of the prize which fell to each soldier, was only a hundred peros; a trifling compensation, in-

deed, for such a variety of hardships, and such a multiplicity of perils. Cortes, however, with his usual persuasive powers, succeeded in calming the discontent of his followers, and by secret presents to some, promises to others, and by raising the hopes of all towards the future, the distribution made was quietly suffered to stand.*

Fortune had hitherto crowned not only the most daring, but the wildest, undertakings of the Spaniards; but the time was now arrived when adversity began to shadow their unclouded career. The Mexican nobility awoke from their lethargy, and seriously turned their thoughts to the evils which weighed upon their country. They saw their monarch a debased captive, insensible to the sting of his own disgrace; Cacamatzin, and those of the Mexicans who were specially distinguished for their courage and abilities, lingering in confinement; the worship of their gods insulted; and the whole land subjected to the dominion of a foreign prince. Several secret meetings accordingly took place, and frequent interviews were held between Montezuma and his principal lords, who remonstrated strongly with him on their fallen state, and disclosed their intention of attacking these presumptuous strangers, the authors of all their calamities. The priests, in particular, evinced their hatred towards the Spaniards, solemnly declaring, that it was the pleasure of the gods that they should all be put to death. This conspiracy was daily gaining strength, yet to attempt any violent act, though it might prove successful in the end, would also inevitably involve the ruin of Montezuma.

* B. Diaz.

It was therefore resolved to adopt more temperate measures in order to effect the expulsion of the Spaniards from the capital. The monarch desired an interview with Cortes, who, already apprised of the frequent conferences of the Mexicans, felt an inward anxiety, which he endeavoured to conceal under an assumption of composure.

Montezuma, in a tone more abrupt and severe than was usual, told the Spanish general, that having remained already six months in Mexico, and all the purposes of his mission being also fulfilled, there was no reason for a longer stay in the capital; he must, therefore, take measures for a speedy departure from his empire. The priests and nobles, and the people, had expressed their resolution not to suffer the Spaniards to remain any longer in the land; and it was further manifested by the gods, that those beings by whom they had been affronted, should be immediately expelled or sacrificed.* The nature of this demand, and the resolute tone in which it was pronounced, made Cortes sensible that it sprung from the effects of a powerful machination; and though prepared for some unpleasant intelligence, this requisition was so unexpected, and the attitude assumed by Montezuma so peremptory, that his mind was filled with serious apprehensions. But that self-possession which never deserted Cortes on the most trying occasions, fortunately came to his assistance on the present. He saw that the Mexicans had now assumed a dangerous position, one from which they were to be dislodged rather by stratagem than force; and as the valour and the arms of the Spa-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

niards could here be of little avail, Cortes searched for resources in his own mind for the difficulty. He apparently resolved to acquiesce, when he could not openly oppose, and therefore, with admirable tact and singular composure, informed the monarch, that he saw nothing but what was strictly just in the wishes of the Mexicans; that he had himself already turned his thought towards preparations for departure; but that unfortunately, it could not take place with the expedition required. The destruction of the ships in which they had arrived, made it necessary that others should be constructed. This task demanded much labour, and he hoped, therefore, that the king would admit these as sufficient reasons to protract his sojourn in the Mexican dominions.

Montezuma, overjoyed at the prospect of expelling those strangers from his kingdom, made no opposition to a request which bore with it all the marks of justice and reason. On the contrary, he cordially embraced Cortes for acquiescing in a measure which would restore peace and happiness to the Mexicans; and eagerly informed him, that, far from using any precipitate haste, the Spaniards might take all the measures and time necessary for their convenient departure. Moreover, he added, that he would himself lend every assistance which Cortes might require for the building of his vessels; and accordingly gave orders that the timber should be cut in a wood near Vera Cruz, and that a number of his carpenters should work under the superintendence of the Spanish.* Cortes having, by this stratagem, retarded his departure,

* Clavigero.

ments, so long as he continued to act without a royal confirmation of his authority. Accordingly, amidst the crowd of perplexing thoughts that incessantly engrossed his mind, this stood paramount; and when he was informed by Montezuma of the armament that had appeared on the coast, he imagined that it belonged to his messengers, and under this pleasing impression, hurried to communicate the joyful tidings to his companions. Cortes now gave himself up to the most sanguine hopes; and his mind, which had been recently put to a painful stretch, was relieved by anticipations of the most favourable nature. He supposed that a powerful reinforcement of soldiers was coming to his assistance, and that he would thereby be enabled to act as circumstances might dictate, and set the vengeance of the Indians at defiance.

But the joy of Cortes was of short continuance. He received soon after a courier from Gonzalo de Sandoval, to whom he had intrusted the command of Vera Cruz, after the death of Escalante, who brought intelligence very different from what he had fondly anticipated. The ships which had arrived on the coast were fitted out by the Governor of Cuba, who had now exerted his utmost power to accomplish the destruction of Cortes. Velazquez could no longer be deceived with respect to the real intentions of the man he had placed at the head of the expedition. The perplexing doubts and fears which had assailed him immediately upon the departure of Cortes from St Jago, were strengthened into certainty by the total neglect of that commander in transmitting an account of his operations to the Governor. But

CHAPTER XV.

Account of the Expedition of Pamphilo de Narvaez.

As nearly nine months had elapsed since Portocarrero and Montejo, the messengers from Cortes, had set sail for Spain, that commander was in daily expectation of their return. He flattered his hopes that his deputies would succeed in their negotiation, and that they would undoubtedly bring the royal sanction to the authority conferred on him by the Junta at Villa Rica. This requisite he considered of vital importance, since without it he could scarcely entertain any reasonable expectations of being able to achieve the mighty enterprise in which he was so far advanced. Despite of his magnanimity and admirable conduct as a leader, and notwithstanding the success which had attended his actions, he was liable now to be represented by hisenemies rather in the light of a traitor, than in that of a conqueror. Besides this, however propitious and rapid his progress had hitherto been, he could not contemplate the reduction of so vast an empire with the slender body under his command—a body lamentably reduced in number, by war, hardship, and disease, and which he could not hope to increase by recruits from Cuba and the other Spanish settle-

a hundred and twenty cross-bowmen, together with fourscore horse, and a train of twelve pieces of artillery. The command of this powerful army, for such it must be considered under the circumstances, he intrusted to Pamphilo de Narvaez, a chief possessing his greatest confidence, and to whom he gave strict orders to seize Cortes and his principal accomplices, and send them prisoners to Cuba.

Narvaez, after a fortunate voyage, landed on the coast of Chempoalla in the month of April, and had the good fortune of being joined by three Spanish deserters, who gave him circumstantial information of all the proceedings of Cortes, and who depicted both his past dangers and hardships, and his actual difficulties and want of strength. They represented the situation of Cortes as beyond the reach of hope; an account which naturally augmented the confidence of Narvaez, and gave a fresh stimulus to his arrogance. But this chief derived another advantage from these deserters, for by their means he had not only acquired intelligence, by which to frame his plan of operations, but had also procured interpreters to facilitate his transactions in the country he came to subdue. Narvaez, without loss of time, sent a deputation to Sandoval, summoning him to surrender the town of Villa Rica. Guevara, a priest, was intrusted with this command, and appeared before the lieutenant of Cortes in a haughty manner, treating both that chief and his followers as rebels and traitors, and imperiously requiring of Sandoval to surrender to Narvaez. But Sandoval, stimulated at once by his fearless disposition, and his attachment to Cortes, desired the priest to lower his pretensions, declaring that his sacred functions alone protected him from the chastisement incur-

red by his insolence. The priest grew more outrageous on perceiving the resolute firmness of the officer; and the altercation becoming very warm, Sandoval was at length impelled to seize Guevara and his companions, and send them prisoners to Mexico.*

Upon their arrival in that capital, Cortes, who always endeavoured to conciliate men by friendly professions before he treated them as enemies, saw the policy of this plan in the present difficult posture of his affairs. He accordingly welcomed Guevara and his attendants as friends and countrymen—treated them with all possible cordiality—released them from their chains—blamed severely the rash conduct of Sandoval, and made an apology for the violence of that officer. This courteous behaviour soothed the irritation of the prisoners, and the rich presents by which it was followed, totally won their confidence and good-will. Cortes had accordingly no great difficulty in making himself master of all those particulars which, under existing circumstances, it was important to learn; and the extent of the danger by which he was threatened, was of a description to darken his most sanguine prospects, and to infuse despondency into the stoutest heart. Narvaez had insidiously laboured to impress the Indians with the belief that Cortes was an outlaw and a rebel—an oppressor, who, under an usurped jurisdiction, was carrying his depredations over the country, whilst he kept Montezuma in unjust confinement. On the other hand, he represented himself as the deputy of the Spanish King, armed with power to redress the wrongs of the Indians, and

* B. Diaz.

punish the crimes of their oppressor; and these declarations, artfully spread through the country, were not slow in producing the desired effect. Several Mexican provinces declared themselves in open rebellion against Cortes, whilst Montezuma himself was carrying on a clandestine correspondence with Narvaez, whom he was now induced to consider in every respect superior to the former chief.

Never was the courage of a general, the magnanimity of a philosopher, or the genius of a great man, subjected to a more difficult test than the one it was now the fate of Cortes to undergo. This was, indeed, one of those cases which called for an uncommon exertion of his singular powers, and in which his extraordinary fortitude was conspicuously displayed. On whatever side he turned there appeared nothing but a prospect of danger, and every plan which his genius suggested fell incomparably short of the exigencies of the occasion. He could neither advance against Narvaez, attempt a retreat from Mexico, nor remain tranquil in that capital. Whichever of these three courses he should adopt, ruin would follow its execution. To oppose Narvaez openly would argue insanity, considering the vast superiority of that general's forces, and the assistance he might derive from Montezuma. On the other hand, if he set that monarch free, and attempted a retreat from Mexico, he would be obliged, not only to relinquish the conquest of that empire, and thus lose the reward of his victories, and the fruit of so many toils and sacrifices, but destruction seemed unavoidable. The order for an evacuation of the capital would be the announcement that the Spaniards were no longer the formidable beings which they had

hitherto been judged, and would also prove the signal for the Mexicans to fall upon them with all their power. Neither could Cortes protract his stay at Mexico, to await there the arrival of Narvaez; for if it was dangerous to attack him in the open field, the danger would be increased in a tenfold degree, when cooped up in the precincts of a hostile city. Such was the embarrassing position of Cortes; but instead of sinking under the pressure of so many, and overwhelming difficulties, he vigorously exercised his energies to provide a noble resistance.

On one point his mind was irrevocably fixed. He would not quit that country as a prisoner, which he had traversed as a conqueror, and being almost considered as a divinity. Nor would he tamely abandon that enterprise, towards the success of which he had so largely contributed, and permit another to avail himself of the efforts, and enjoy the fruits, of his genius, courage, and perseverance. Under this impression, he felt convinced that this event must be terminated by arms; for, however unequal the contest, it was yet the best course he could pursue. But before affairs were brought to so distressing a necessity, he was anxious to strain every effort towards a more conciliatory issue. This thought was at once prompted by policy, as well as inclination. His mind revolted from the idea of being compelled to take up arms against his own countrymen, and to lose in civil dissension that strength which was so necessary for the reduction of the country. On the other hand, should he be forced to embrace the last extremity, he saw the advantage of weakening by stratagem the formidable force of his adversary, before he

risked the event of a battle. He therefore resolved to attempt an amicable negotiation before he resorted to actual force.

For this important and delicate mission, it was indispensable to select a man in whose abilities and integrity he could repose implicit confidence. This embassy was directed not only to reconcile the opposition of Narvaez, but, in case of rejection on his part, to undermine the fidelity of his followers. In the choice of a person for a transaction of so much trust, Cortes displayed his usual prudence and tact. Instead of appointing one of his daring, faithful, but violent and rash adherents, he selected the venerable Father Bartholomew de Olmedo, on whose wisdom he could rely, and whose sacred character, as well as the singular respect in which that priest was held, would invest his mission with that importance and respectability which was attached to the person of the ambassador. Besides the verbal instructions of Cortes, Father Olmedo was intrusted with official dispatches to Narvaez, as well as secret letters to some of the principal men in his army. Such were the Oydor Lucas Vazquez, and Andres de Duero, the ancient friend of Cortes, who was ever destined by fate to forward the interests of the latter. Cortes very timely accompanied his messages and promises with magnificent presents, which served at once to establish his generosity, and acted as a great temptation.*

Father Olmedo was received by Narvaez with haughtiness, and his proposals were rejected with scorn. That general, relying on the superiority of

* B. Diaz.

his forces, and already confident of success, took no care to disguise his insolence and vanity. He broke out in invectives against Cortes, and declared, in a tone of mingled triumph and derision, that he would ere long cut off the head of that traitor, and put all his followers to death. It was in vain that Olmedo, with as much mildness as address, endeavoured to represent to Narvaez the impolicy as well as criminality of promoting this unnatural contest between brothers; it was in vain that he expressed the readiness of Cortes to enter into arrangements, and dwelt on the advantages which would accrue to the mother country, if her sons, instead of turning their arms against each other, could be induced to unite them for their mutual benefit. Pamphilo Narvaez would not listen to any overtures, speculating no doubt on the sordid policy of not dividing with a rival the advantages of an achievement of which he considered himself the sole head.

The total failure of his endeavours with the general, induced the negotiator next to turn his attention towards his army. The policy and address of Olmedo, accompanied by the seasonable generosity of Cortes, and the promise of future reward, produced the most fortunate results. The Oydor Vazquez, already influenced in favour of Cortes, was entirely converted to his party the moment that a magnificent present came to strengthen those favourable dispositions. This example was followed by various other officers; and by these means, whilst Pamphilo de Narvaez was wasting his time in vapouring threats, and idle demonstrations of arrogance, the saga-

cious priest was secretly employing every moment in alienating from him the affection and confidence of his army.*

The return of Guevara and his companions from Mexico was also favourable to the cause of Cortes, for they represented this commander as most affable and generous, disposed to enter into any amicable arrangement, and solicitous only for the glory and fortune of the Spanish arms. They strongly protested against violent measures, declaring that a civil war would be disastrous and unjust, when carried on against a man who had rendered such important services to his country; and these remonstrances induced some to think of peace, whilst others were captivated with the generous character of Cortes. Narvaez was enraged at these demonstrations, and commanded Guevara never more to mention the subject of negotiation; but though he might command, he could not prevent the mischief already done to his cause. Nevertheless, despising both his enemy and the favourable reports circulated of him, Narvaez caused a proclamation to be made, declaring Cortes, and all his followers, rebels to their king, and traitors to their country.

Perceiving every attempt at accommodation fruitless, Cortes now vigorously resolved to oppose his intractable foe. Despite of the disadvantages under which he laboured, he summoned all his resolution to make one extraordinary effort. Although his force was but very insignificant, he found it necessary to reduce it still farther, by leaving a garrison at Mexico, for he knew the great advantage of keeping Montezuma in his power. This garrison, consisting of 150 men, he

* B. Diaz.

placed under the command of Pedro Alvarado, an officer distinguished alike for his courage and his attachment to his general, and one for whom the Mexicans entertained a particular regard. To such insufficient force did Cortes commit the care of a populous and hostile city, and the person of an intriguing sovereign, while he himself, with another slender body, was determined to meet a numerous army, fresh, vigorous, and unbroken by any of those hardships and calamities which had assailed his own. In taking leave of Montezuma, Cortes used the most profound policy, assuring him that the new comers were friends, and that a single interview would remove any trivial difference which might exist. He farther added, that he left Alvarado at Mexico on account of the popularity which that officer had acquired by his affability and kindliness of manners, as well as the special regard with which he was honoured by the sovereign of the Mexicans. But whilst he made these cordial demonstrations, Cortes, though apparently confiding in the friendship and good faith of Montezuma, gave strict orders to Alvarado to guard that monarch with the utmost vigilance.

Cortes left Mexico about the beginning of May 1520, six months after his arrival in that capital. His march was rapid, having left his baggage and artillery behind; for he placed the chief hope of success in the activity of his movements, and decision of his measures. That which chiefly embarrassed him was the enemy's cavalry. It was a formidable force, and he feared that his own slender body, however resolute and determined, would never be able to withstand the attack. But with the foresight of a skilful leader, he dispatched

Tobilla with a few soldiers to Chinantla to procure from its casique three hundred of the spears used by his warlike Indians in battle; for the Chinantla spears being of singular length and firmness, Cortes considered them as the most efficient weapons he could employ in resisting the attacks of the cavalry. Cortes now proceeded rapidly towards Chempoalla, of which place Narvaez had taken possession, and was joined by Sandoval and the garrison of Vera Cruz at Tapanacuetla, a village thirty miles distance from that city. His whole force then did not exceed two hundred and fifty men,* yet with this small body Cortes advanced boldly against a formidable enemy; nor did indeed any one of his gallant followers evince any sentiments but those of undaunted resolution and unshaken fidelity to their general. Cortes here made another attempt at negotiation, to effect which, he sent Father Olmedo a second time into the enemy's camp; but this message was not productive of more success than the former; for Narvaez proved uniformly intractable and overbearing, and would come to no terms short of the complete and absolute subjection of Cortes and his whole party.

Olmedo artfully protracted his stay with Narvaez, for, though his remonstrances proved totally fruitless, yet he rendered essential service to Cortes by his intercourse with the soldiers. Velazquez de Leon, a brave and gallant officer, one indeed who, from his services, merits, and relationship with the Governor of Cuba, was considered

* Cortes, Relat. B. Diaz says they were only two hundred and six in all.

as second in command to Cortes, had received a letter from the enemy inviting him over to the camp, and using every argument to alienate him from his general. Narvaez had been induced to take this step, relying on the relationship of that officer with his employer, no less than the opposition which he had exhibited in the commencement of the expedition towards Cortes. But Valazquez de Leon, with that noble frankness which distinguished his character, scorned to betray his general's cause, and immediately put the letter into the hands of Cortes. That commander was grateful for this proof of fidelity, though it did not by any means excite his surprise, Velazquez de Leon possessing, in conjunction with Sandoval, his greatest friendship and confidence. The open and manly resistance which Leon had made to Cortes in the first instance, and his subsequent attachment, were the best security of his fidelity; and Cortes accordingly sent him on another embassy to Narvaez, persuaded that this visit, instead of shaking the firmness of Leon, would, on the contrary, forward his own views, by the interest which that officer would possess with Narvaez and his army. Velazquez de Leon was received at the enemy's camp with unbounded demonstrations of joy, and treated with profound respect. The most brilliant offers were made to him on condition that he should abandon Cortes, and Narvaez even proposed to appoint him his second in command; but Leon rejected these bribes with scorn, solemnly declaring that even the fear of death should not induce him to quit a commander who had done such signal service to his country, and whom he considered as the

most worthy, as well as competent, to finish the enterprise he had so gloriously commenced. Hereupon, Narvaez and one of his officers, a relation of the Governor of Cuba, were greatly exasperated, and broke out into their wonted strain of abuse against Cortes; and Velazquez de Leon, hearing his general and all his brave companions declared rebels and traitors, laid hand on his weapon, and a sanguinary scene would have sealed his bravery and devotion, had not some judicious Spaniards timely interposed, and obliged both Leon and Father Olmedo to leave the camp. But the mission of these persons had been attended with considerable success, as they had infused a spirit of disaffection among the troops, a great part of which reprobated the blind obstinacy of the general, who would rather encourage a disastrous civil contention, than listen to terms of accommodation. Narvaez and his principal adherents were now so firmly fixed in their purpose, that shortly after Cortes and his officers were publicly declared traitors, and the price of two thousand crowns set upon the head of the general and on that of Sandoval; and hearing that, despite of so many awful threats, that chief and his party had advanced within a league of Chempoalla, he felt indignant at their arrogance, and therefore set his army in motion, with the intention of offering them battle.

Cortes, informed by a deserter that Narvaez had drawn up his whole army in a large plain near Chempoalla, where it was his intention to await an attack, was not imprudent enough to allow such advantages of position to an enemy already so greatly superior in every other respect. He

accordingly remained quiet on the opposite side of the river Canoas, which runs near Chempoalla, awaiting for a more favourable opportunity of carrying his plans into execution. A heavy fall of rain having set in, the soldiers of Narvaez, little inured to hardships, and despising the small force of the enemy, began now to murmur at being thus unnecessarily exposed to the inclemency of the weather; and some of the officers, also, represented to the general, that as there was no possibility of Cortes attempting an attack, it would be more prudent to keep the troops fresh and vigorous, for which purpose they should be ordered back to their quarters. This was accordingly done, and Narvaez retreated into Chempoalla, after having posted only two sentinels to watch the motions of the enemy at the ford of the river, and ordered a detachment of horse to patrol on the road to the town, and round his quarters.* Meantime, the small but gallant troop of Cortes stood drenched in the rain that poured in torrents, without evincing any signs of discontent or impatience; and their general, with a look of mingled pride and satisfaction, beheld his hardy veterans unbroken in spirit and ready for service. Auguring most favourably of such men, he now determined to carry into effect a daring and difficult exploit—no less than to attack the enemy at the dead of night, as he naturally conceived, that after the fatigue of the day, and not apprehending danger, they would yield themselves up to repose.

He accordingly made a long and impassioned oration to his little army, in which he eloquently

* B. Diaz; Solis.

depicted to them the sufferings they had undergone —the dangers they had braved—the victories they had achieved—and then wound up the picture by vividly representing to them the reward they were destined to receive for all their toil and services. They were declared rebels and traitors, and a war of extermination was decreed by those unnatural brothers, whom no concession, no effort, could conciliate. Cortes was frequently interrupted in this harangue by the shouts of his soldiers, and at the close, by unanimous acclamations, declaring their resolution to follow him wherever he should lead them—to conquer or perish. Nay, their enthusiasm was so ardently excited, that some of them exclaimed they would kill Cortes if he again attempted any accommodation with Narvaez.* Hereupon the general extolled the courage of his soldiers, and warmly thanked them for their attachment. He then divided his little army into three parties. The first he intrusted to the command of Sandoval, and as this division was to perform the most difficult part, that of seizing the enemy's artillery, Cortes took care to place in it, not only his chosen soldiers, but some of his best officers, among whom was his relation Pizarro, who afterwards became so celebrated. The command of the second body he gave to Christoval de Olid, with instructions to storm the tower, and seize on Narvaez. Cortes himself led the third; which acted as a small body of reserve, and was to fly to the support of the other two as occasion should demand. The incessant rain had swollen the river so much, that it was forded with

* B. Diaz.

the utmost danger, the water rising to the soldiers' breasts; but those breasts were so ardently excited by the approaching attack, as to be proof against every difficulty. The little army having performed this toilsome act, now advanced in perfect silence and regular order, each man armed with his sword, dagger, and long spear. The advanced guard was fortunate in securing one of the sentinels; but the other escaped, and fled into Chempoalla to sound the alarm. This obliged Cortes to hasten his movements; and he accordingly redoubled the rapidity of his march, which was, however, conducted in the same silence and order as in the commencement. Narvaez treated the intelligence brought by the sentinel with contempt, imputing his alarm to fear, and conceiving it impossible that Cortes would be rash enough to attempt an attack with a force so disproportionate to his own.

Hernan Cortes arrived at Chempoalla a little after midnight, without having met any impediment in his way, the patrol of horse having either lost the road in the darkness of the night, or abandoned their post to take shelter from the rain that continued to fall at intervals. By this means Cortes entered the city, and proceeding with the same caution, at length arrived unobserved before the principal temple, where Narvaez held his quarters. The place was strongly fortified by a long range of artillery, that guarded the approach to the temple, but Cortes gave the signal for the assault, and Sandoval, with his gallant troops, rushed forward with such courage and rapidity, that the enemy had only time to fire two or three cannon, before they found themselves compelled to have

recourse to their other weapons. Sandoval, with unparalleled intrepidity, now drove the soldiers from the guns, and began to force his way up the steps, amidst a storm of arrows and balls. But Narvaez, though deficient in the prudence of a general, was not wanting in the bravery of a soldier; and having quickly armed himself, he made disposition for a vigorous resistance. The numbers that crowded the steps of the temple had impeded the progress of Sandoval, who, however, still maintained his ground with intrepidity, and kept possession of the guns; when Christoval de Olid and Cortes rushing to his assistance, bore down all opposition; and Sandoval, with two or three others, reached the door of the temple, and endeavoured, but in vain, to burst it open. In the meantime, a soldier having set fire to the thatched roof of the tower, the conflagration compelled its inmates to sally out, when Narvaez was wounded by the blow of a spear from Sanchez Farzan. The commander fell; and being instantly seized, he was dragged down the steps, and secured with fetters. The rumour of his death now spread about; and this false report contributed not a little to paralyze the already feeble exertions of his followers; whilst the shouts of victory increased the ardour, and gave a fresh impulse to the efforts of their enemy. In the two smaller towers, where the rest of the army was stationed, confusion and alarm soon began to prevail, and their own guns, which had been captured, were now directed against them; while the intense darkness of the night, as well as the alarm consequent on so unexpected a surprisal, tended to make them see everywhere objects of danger and terror. Thus, the numerous

small lights, proceeding from the shining insects which abound in those parts, were converted by the heated fancies of the soldiers into as many musketeers advancing with ready matches against them;* and Diego Velasquez and Salvatierra endeavoured in vain to animate their men, who, now dispirited by the apparent advantage obtained by the enemy, began to lay down their arms and surrender. Meanwhile Narvaez, and the rest of the captured officers, were intrusted to the care of Sandoval, to whose gallant conduct this splendid achievement was in a great measure due; and he had them removed to a secure place, under the custody of his most confidential soldiers.

At the break of day every sign of hostility had ceased, and Cortes was discovered seated on a chair, surrounded by Sandoval, Ordaz, Velazquez de Leon, and the rest of his victorious officers; where he received the salutations of the vanquished cavaliers, as they proceeded in rotation to kiss his hand, not only with affability, but cordially embracing them as countrymen and friends. He then sent Lugo, with a competent body of men, to bring the pilots, and men employed at the fleet, to Chempoalla, as well as to dismantle the vessels, in order to prevent any communication with Cuba. He then ordered every one of the adverse party to be set free, except Narvaez and Salvatierra, whom he continued to keep under strict guard. This signal victory was obtained by Cortes with very little bloodshed, only three of his men being killed; while the loss of the enemy amounted to no more than two officers, and fifteen soldiers.

* Solis; B. Diaz.

But his conduct after the triumph was as masterly as his courage had been conspicuous during the fight. He offered to the followers of Narvaez either to send them back to Cuba, with all their goods, or to enrol them into his service, to be the partners of his dangers and glory, on the same terms with his own men; and the latter proposition was almost unanimously accepted by the conquered army.* With the exception of a few devoted adherents of Narvaez, all the rest of his troops, both officers and soldiers, joyfully closed with a proposal, which seemed to open so vast a field to their hopes. The trinkets and various ornaments of gold ostentatiously displayed by the followers of Cortes, fired them with the desire of becoming masters of such booty; while the generosity and affability of that commander won their esteem, at the same time that the valour and abilities which he had recently so brilliantly displayed, convinced them that they could not obey a general who wielded greater elements of victory and success.

The victory of Cortes over Narvaez happened on the 27th of May, 1520, and the advantage obtained by this fortunate event was immense, in his present situation. With the reinforcement of soldiers from Narvaez, he found himself at the head of a hundred horse, plenty of ammunition, and other military stores, as well as a body of men deserving the name of an army. "Thus," says Robertson, "by a series of events no less fortunate than uncommon, Cortes not only escaped from perdition which seemed inevitable, but, when he had least

* Cortes, Relat.; Herra, Dec.

reason to expect it, was placed at the head of a thousand Spaniards, ready to follow wherever he should lead them." He adds, however, "that these events will be apt to be ascribed, as much to the intrigues as to the arms of Cortes; and that the ruin of Narvaez was occasioned, no less by the treachery of his followers, than by the valour of the enemy."

But, to whatever causes this result is to be attributed, it will always appear an extraordinary instance of courage, ability, and good fortune, and consequently redounding greatly to the honour of Cortes and his gallant troops. An unvarnished recital of facts will present, to the unprejudiced reader, a man harassed on every side with seemingly insurmountable difficulties, and by an uncommon exertion of genius rising superior to them all. It will show a commander, with a handful of men, reducing a powerful army, in the midst of a hostile country, and converting to his own use those very elements intended for his own immediate destruction. The greatness of the attempt, and the singular success of the execution, will be the best comment upon the transaction.

CHAPTER XVI.

Insurrection of the Mexicans, and its effects.

NEVER was a general more timely put in possession of a brave army, or did a more immediate occasion present itself to call its courage into action. A few days only had elapsed after the overthrow of Narvaez, when a courier arrived from Alvarado with the most alarming account of the state of Mexico. The inhabitants had taken up arms against the Spaniards, who were now threatened with almost unavoidable destruction. The two brigantines which Cortes had caused to be constructed, that he might possess a command over the lake, had been destroyed. Alvarado was closely besieged in his quarters, and incessantly exposed to the furious attacks of the Mexicans. Seven Spaniards had already been killed, and it was apprehended that every one would share the same fate, unless Cortes hastened to their assistance.

This intelligence filled the Spanish commander with sorrow and alarm. He knew how incompetent was the slender force of Alvarado to resist the repeated attacks of an infuriate foe; and even should their valour for some time repel the aggressions of the Mexicans, still they would not be able long to withstand the effects of famine. The

danger was imminent, and allowed no time for delay. But on the eve of the departure of Cortes from Chempoalla, four messengers arrived from Mexico, bringing the most bitter complaints of Alvarado, whom they accused of uncommon atrocity, and to whose ruthless conduct the present state of the capital was attributed. Cortes, by comparing the information afforded by both parties, as well as by his own judicious deductions from the state of the country, soon came to the conclusion that the revolt was of no ordinary description. It was evident that the restless spirit of the Mexicans and their desire of revenge, which had been checked and awed by the presence of Cortes, raged with tenfold violence from the moment when they were no longer checked by their fears of that commander. They considered his departure from Mexico as the moment destined by fate to put in practice their hostile designs. They perceived the Spaniards divided among themselves; this they considered a most favourable juncture to attempt their destruction, while the very slender garrison left at Mexico increased their hopes of success. An opportunity now offered to rescue Montezuma from the power of the Spaniards, and pour on those strangers the full measure of their hatred and revenge. Several meetings were accordingly held for this effect, and many schemes proposed to insure a fortunate issue to the undertaking. The Spaniards having received due intelligence of these machinations, the sense of danger made them anxious to provide a remedy in proportion to the exigency of the occasion; but unfortunately the conduct of their chief, Alvarado, instead of supplying this remedy, tended only by

its imprudence to heighten the peril and to precipitate its explosion.

Alvarado was a bold, gallant young man, and one of those officers on whose activity, resolution, and bravery, Cortes placed an unbounded reliance. But whilst he possessed all those qualities which rendered him of such essential service when acting under the inspection of an able and experienced chief, he was ill qualified for extensive and absolute command. The levity of his conduct, while it had amused many of the Mexicans, was calculated to excite the respect of none. Reckless courage, unaided by policy, were but indifferent advantages amongst men who possessed that virtue in an uncommon degree. It was by a masterly admixture of temporizing and intrepidity, softness and rigour, prudence and resolution; by an admirable use alternately made of various and seemingly opposite qualities, that Cortes had gained his extraordinary ascendency over the Indians, and that he had been enabled to achieve a series of daring and splendid exploits.

But though Alvarado might be equal to Cortes in the virtues of a soldier, he was greatly his inferior in the abilities of a leader. Violence and force were his chief support, resources of which Cortes only availed himself in cases of extremity, and when every other means had failed. At the news of the premeditated insurrection of the Mexicans, Alvarado, instead of endeavouring to allay the storm by devising artful stratagems, or adopting soothing measures, took precisely that course which was most calculated to increase it. The principal festival of the Mexicans, that of *Huitzilopochtli*, the god of war, took place whilst

Cortes was absent on his expedition against Narvaez; and this festival was uniformly celebrated with certain dances, in which the king, the nobles, the priests, and the people joined. According to the ancient usage, the principal persons among the Mexicans were assembled for this purpose in the large court of the great temple, and Alvarado having denied the request of the nobles, who desired Montezuma to join in the ceremony, the Mexicans were preparing to perform the religious dance among themselves. They had begun to dance and sing, accompanied by musical instruments, and were proceeding through the pious exercise in the usual manner, when Alvarado, instigated by the apprehension of the intended revolt, and allured perhaps by the rich display of gold ornaments among the assembled nobles, considered this a fit opportunity at once to secure his safety, and reap a harvest of wealth. He accordingly ordered his soldiers out, and fell upon the Mexicans with as much rapidity as fury. So unexpected and violent a charge overpowered the Indians in such a manner, that before they could defend themselves, a considerable number had been massacred. They however collected themselves to repel the aggression, and several Spaniards were killed. This cruel act aroused every dormant feeling of the Mexicans. They would now be restrained by no consideration. Even the danger incurred by Montezuma could not divert his fierce subjects from the resolution they had taken; and not only the capital, but the whole empire, rung with the sounds of war and revenge. The Mexican troops assaulted the Spanish quarters with such ferocious impetuosity, that they did considerable injury to the walls,

and destroyed almost all their ammunition.* From that moment a regular siege commenced, and the small garrison remained in a dreadful state of suspense and agony—repelling, however, with uncommon bravery, the furious attacks of the enemy, but impressed with a gloomy idea of unavoidable destruction.

Cortes disposed his affairs with that promptitude of decision and rapidity of execution that characterised him on every trying occasion. He made a short oration to the followers of Narvaez, who again loudly declared their earnest desire to follow under his command. He then appointed Rodrigo Ranzel his lieutenant at Villa Rica, intrusting to him the custody of Narvaez and Salvatierra, and without further delay began his march towards Mexico with extraordinary expedition. He was joined at Tlascala by two thousand chosen warriors, which, together with the considerable body of Spaniards which he had now under his orders, he considered a sufficient force to quell the disturbance in the capital. With this army he proceeded rapidly to Tezcuco; but scarcely had he entered the Mexican territories, when strong symptoms of the disaffection which prevailed became apparent. Instead of the welcome and ceremony that usually marked his arrival in the Indian towns, he now found these towns deserted at his approach, no provision made for his subsistence, and every thing bearing the impress of that deep antipathy, that brooding revenge, by which the natives were actuated.

Cortes was suffered to pass unmolested, but in

* Clavigero.

the boding silence which reigned, and in the studious care with which the Indians shunned every intercourse, he easily divined that he had nothing now to expect from them but determined defiance, and that their reduction was no longer to be effected by the arts of subtle policy, but by the force of arms. On the 24th of June 1520, Cortes again entered Mexico, but he met with a very different reception from that which marked his first arrival in that capital. None of the nobles came forward to compliment him, and the whole city bore a strange aspect of silence and gloom. The Spanish commander* was greatly affected by these symptoms, but, confident in the superior force which he now commanded, took very little care to conceal his displeasure, or even to act with that prudential blandness which hitherto appeared to characterise his policy. He treated Montezuma with unequivocal contempt; and when that king came to congratulate him on his victory over Narvaez, Cortes turned from him with disgust, refusing an answer to his address.† This conduct, so strangely at variance with the usual politeness and deep policy of Cortes, is only to be accounted for on the twofold reason of his being persuaded of the connivance of Montezuma with the actions of his subjects, and the consciousness of the force which he had now both to punish and subdue. Cortes summoned Alvarado into his presence, and entered into a close examination of the disastrous transactions which had taken place during his absence. Alvarado presented a defence, which was far from justifying the excesses which he had com-

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

mitted, but yet presented an ostensible pretence of necessity for his violent conduct. He declared, that he had been informed by a priest and two nobles, that every measure was taken for the effectual extinction of the Spaniards in Mexico, a report having reached that capital that Cortes and his scanty troop had been discomfited by Narvaez. Alvarado further alleged, in vindication, that he had fallen on the Indians on the festival of the god of war, because the intelligence he had received was of such a nature as to admit of no delay; and he considered no opportunity more favourable to strike terror into the hearts of the conspirators, who were then assembled in the court of the temple. Cortes received the defence of Alvarado with evident dissatisfaction, and treated his whole conduct in the strongest terms of censure.* But the behaviour of the general himself, upon his reappearance at Mexico, was far from deserving praise. Powerfully impressed with the idea, that Montezuma was carrying on a system of profound duplicity, and further exasperated at the want of provisions, he acted with a haughty demeanour towards the nobles, and sent an arrogant message to that monarch, to see that an abundant supply of food was immediately procured for his troops. The contemptuous expressions used by the Spanish commander were faithfully reported by some Mexicans, who knew enough of the language, to their companions. This inflamed their rage the more, and from that moment a war of deathless hate, of utter extermination, commenced.

A Spanish soldier, who had been commissioned

* B. Diaz.

by Cortes to bring to Mexico the daughter of Montezuma, and other ladies left at Tacuba under the care of the Cazique, appeared now at the quarters, dreadfully wounded, and sinking with fatigue and loss of blood. He had been attacked on the causeway by the infuriated Indians, who strained every effort to secure him, in order to offer him as a sacrifice to their god; but the Spaniard, by the uncommon exertions of despair, had been able to effect his escape. This soldier announced, that the whole country were up in arms, and that from every quarter multitudes were advancing to achieve the extermination of the Spaniards. Cortes immediately ordered a detachment of four hundred men to reconnoitre, under the command of Diego de Ordaz; but these Spaniards had scarcely advanced into the streets, when they were assailed with incessant showers of arrows, mingled with fearful vows of revenge. The aspect of the people was terrific, and the inveteracy of their purpose was clearly manifested in their tokens of aversion. The streets were crowded with a mighty throng, eager to close with the hated enemy; while the roofs of the temples and houses were also covered with Indians, keeping up an uninterrupted discharge of their missiles. Ordaz in a short time found himself hemmed in by this multitude. He could neither continue his progress, nor effect a retreat. He was charged at once in front and in the rear, and a prodigious quantity of arrows, darts, and stones, were showered on his division from all quarters. The Spaniards fought with the resolution of despair; and their leader, Ordaz, acquired much glory by his intrepidity and steady

composure in the midst of so appalling a conflict. It was, however, with the utmost difficulty that he forced his way back to the Spanish quarters, with the loss of eight men, and a great number of wounded.* This success emboldened the Mexicans to continue their hostility with redoubled animosity. Accordingly, the following day, they came in formidable array to attack the Spanish quarters. Nothing could exceed the terror inspired by their prodigious force, but the ferocity which appeared conspicuous in their deportment. A sort of frenzy—a frightful enthusiasm—led them on. Cortes could not stem the ever-returning fury of fresh attacks; though the artillery swept the encumbered streets at every volley, the place of the fallen was instantaneously supplied by other Indians, who, regardless of the fate of their companions, seemed only intent on obtaining the victory by wearying out the strength of the enemy by unceasing perseverance. They continued the attack during the whole day, and it demanded all the vigilance and extraordinary presence of mind of Cortes to prevent the enemy from forcing their way into the quarters, a feat which they were once or twice on the point of achieving. But all the efforts of the Spaniards could not avoid a partial conflagration, which they were only able to check by throwing down a wall to extinguish it: thus exposing themselves to one danger in seeking protection from another.

Cortes was not less astonished than alarmed at symptoms of such unconquerable ferocity. The total destruction of his men appeared inevitable.

* Clavigero. B. Diaz says he lost twenty-three men.

The threats of the Mexicans alone were sufficient to strike terror even into the stout hearts of the veterans of Cortes, much more into those of the followers of Narvaez. The Indians continually menaced the Spaniards with the sacrifice which was promised to their gods. They were told that the voracious animals in the temple had been kept in a rigorous fast, that they might the more eagerly devour the bodies of the Spaniards when offered in sacrifice; and that the Tlascalans and other allies were to be confined in cages, in order to fatten for the some purpose.* To men who had visited the temples, and were acquainted with the frightful butcheries of the Mexicans, such a declaration could not but be attended by a corresponding feeling of horror. The constant state of alarm, the uncommon series of present calamities that weighed on the Spaniards, and the dismal prospect that bounded their future horizon, began to produce the most fatal effects amongst many of the soldiers, and symptoms of discontent were clearly conspicuous amongst the followers of Narvaez. These had fondly indulged the hopes of coming to Mexico to share the spoils of a conquest already achieved; instead of which, they found themselves constantly harassed by a formidable enemy, and surrounded on every side with omens of direful promise. They cursed their own infatuation in listening to the delusive words of Cortes, and loudly complained against that commander for his rashness in plunging the Spaniards into so mad and fruitless an enterprise. Thus had the leader to combat the baneful consequences of

* B. Diaz.

disaffection amongst his troops, whilst his active mind was at the same time providing against the unwearied attempts of the enemy.* But this was no time either to complain or speculate—resolution alone could rescue the Spaniards from utter ruin; and Cortes, in the midst of so much misery, preserving his fortitude, resolved by a bold effort to restore confidence to his soldiers. He made a desperate sally against the enemy, in which, though he behaved with uncommon intrepidity, he was compelled to retreat, after losing ten men, and leaving almost all the rest of the party, amounting to fifty, wounded.†

But the ferocious obstinacy of the Mexicans could neither obscure the genius of Cortes, nor damp his courage. His mind seemed to expand in proportion to the urgency, and the strength of his soul to increase with the load of misfortune. He resolved to show the enemy that his inveteracy of design was equal to his daring and intrepidity in execution; and accordingly he gave orders for a second and more vigorous sally. Having perceived that the soldiers had sustained the greatest injury from the disastrous warfare carried on from windows and the roofs of the houses, he provided against this inconveniency by constructing four machines of war called *Mantas*. These military engines were made of strong timber, covered by a roof, and moved on wheels. They could each conveniently contain from twenty to thirty combatants, who, under protection of this shelter, used their fire-arms in comparative security.

Every arrangement being made, Cortes under-

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

took the second sally, which he commanded in person. The greater part of his troops, as well as two thousand Tlascalans, were employed in this dangerous service. The appearance of the Spaniards was hailed by the enemy with their accustomed shouts of aversion and defiance, and soon followed by a shower of their missiles. The four artificial turrets, though in the first instance profitable to Cortes, were but inadequate shelter against the exertions of the Mexicans. Indeed the Indians presented, to the astonishment of Cortes, proofs of ability equal to their courage. They made use of every stratagem—every resource which the peculiar position of their city afforded, was industriously improved and converted into means of resistance or offence. They fought in the streets, from the roofs, from the canals; in some places the Spaniards found barriers to oppose their progress—in others, the communication by means of the canals were intercepted, and the bridges broken down; but what added to the anxiety of the Spanish commander, was to perceive the demolition of the four portable turrets, which was effected by means of ponderous stones and huge pieces of rock which the Mexicans hurled from above.* The conflict lasted with unabated ardour during the day. The priests incessantly inflamed the warriors by their voice, and the nobles by their example; and the Spaniards, harassed by powerful masses on every side—tormented by incessant volleys of arrows, at last endeavoured to set fire to the city, in order to check the annoyance created by those who fought under cover of their

* Solis.

habitations. After many successive hours of incessant fighting, Cortes gave orders to retreat, having burnt down several houses, and produced a fearful slaughter among the enraged Mexicans. There was nothing, however, to compensate for the loss of forty soldiers, besides more than sixty wounded, himself among the latter, being wounded in the hand.*

At the sight of such implacable hatred among the Indians, and the deplorable loss with which every fresh sally was attended, Cortes perceived the wide extent of his danger. He could not render himself master of the city by force, nor could he enter into any advantageous negotiation with the inhabitants. His continuance in Mexico was accompanied not only with the dangers arising from unremitting warfare, but by the dismal prospect of famine which the scarcity of their provisions now rendered more than probable; and in proportion as the distresses of the Spaniards increased, the hopes of the enemy would be inflamed, and their exertions redoubled. Yet, on the other hand, to abandon so glorious an enterprise, and lose by a retreat the fruit of so many achievements and privations, was a contemplation of the most painful nature to the Spanish commander. Nor was the mind of Montezuma in a state of greater composure. He had observed from one of the towers the previous engagements, and the animosity by which they were distinguished. He perceived that his brother, the lord of Iztapalapan, headed the Mexican troops, and that the whole city was delivered to bloodshed and devastation.

* B. Diaz; Solis.

The contemplation of such disastrous objects inspired the monarch with regret and apprehension. He considered the loss of his crown and life to be rapidly approaching, no less than the destruction of his great capital. The revenge of the Mexicans, and the intrepidity of the Spaniards, taught him that nothing but accumulated misfortune could result from a continuation of hostilities; and that whichever party remained triumphant, the victory would only be obtained by the destruction and depopulation of the city.

Impressed with this idea, he resolved to propose to Cortes that he should evacuate Mexico, as the only means of putting an end to such an accumulation of disasters. In these reflections he spent the night, and early on the next day requested an interview with the Spanish chief. It did not require much labour to persuade Cortes that a tranquil evacuation of the city was the least disastrous alternative he could embrace under the present distressing circumstances. The repeated calamities that assailed him—the constant danger to which his men were exposed, no less than their increasing dissatisfaction from the severe service they were compelled to endure, induced him to lend a favourable ear to the proposal of Montezuma. He accordingly promised to retreat from Mexico for the present, but desired that the monarch would adopt every measure conducive to an unmolested egress from the city. For this effect he required that the Mexicans should lay down their arms. Montezuma, overjoyed at the compliance of Cortes, readily promised the security which was demanded,* and offered immediately to in-

* Clavigero; Solis.

terpose his authority with the Mexicans, an event which led subsequently to the death of that monarch.

Bernal Diaz varies considerably from other authorities in his account of this transaction. According to him, such uniformity of resolution did not exist between the Spanish chief and the Mexican sovereign. On the contrary, when Cortes signified his readiness to retreat from the city, desiring Montezuma to address his people, in order to induce them to desist from further aggression, Diaz says the message was indignantly received, and peremptorily refused, by Montezuma, who burst into tears, and uttered many bitter reproaches against the Spanish general. Father Olmedo and Christoval de Olid endeavoured next to conquer the repugnance of the sovereign, but he answered that his remonstrances would produce no effect upon his people, who had chosen another king, and were resolved not to suffer a single Spaniard to escape alive from the city. He, however, was at length prevailed on to address his subjects, "and reduced," to use the words of Robertson, "to the sad necessity of becoming the instrument of his own disgrace, and of the slavery of his people." The reader will use his judgment in this different version of that event. To us it appears not only probable, but perfectly natural, that a monarch, who had been so invariably anxious for the departure of the Spaniards from Mexico, should be inclined to urge any remonstrance, when so favourable a juncture presented itself. On the other hand, he might consider the time for negotiation past, and accordingly refuse his interference. But still it appears more probable that he

would make the attempt, however hopeless, before he voluntarily yielded himself to his own ruin, which he could not but consider as intimately connected with that of the Spaniards.

CHAPTER XVII.

Death of Montezuma, and terrible Conflict in the Temple.

THE Americans now rushed impetuously to the assault of the Spanish quarters. On every side they strove to gain the walls, while the archers let fly a multitude of arrows that greatly annoyed the besieged, who attempted in vain to check the ferocity of the assailants by tremendous discharges of artillery. Some of the Indians had already penetrated within the quarters, and were actually engaged, man to man, with the Spaniards; when in this emergency, Montezuma, agitated by contending feelings, resolved to show himself to his subjects, and endeavour by his words to calm the popular fury. Attired in his regal habiliments, and with all the pomp he affected on the most solemn occasions, he advanced to the battlements, attended by some of his own nobles, and an escort of Spaniards. The moment he appeared the tumult ceased, and a profound silence ensued. The respect of the Mexicans for their captive sovereign mastered every other passion, and some among them kneeled down in humble veneration. Montezuma addressed his infuriated people in an impassioned tone and manner, earnestly requesting

them to desist from hostilities, as it was the firm intention of their enemies to quit the capital, should they be suffered to effect their egress without molestation. To the remonstrances of the monarch, some of the nobles who stood on the foremost ground answered, that with the assistance of the gods, the war would soon be brought to a close, and that they had vowed to accomplish the extermination of the Spaniards. Montezuma proceeded to make use of every argument which he judged conducive to soften their fury, or excite their fears; but his efforts were vain. Affairs had arrived at that extremity when the soothing words of persuasion, and the counsels of prudence, are alike unheeded and despised. A murmur of discontent pervaded the crowd; one of the most daring proceeded to express his indignation in a more unequivocal manner, by calling the king a coward, and the sullen voice of insubordination was followed by open threats and violent reproaches.* The spirit of turbulence spread with fearful rapidity, and the Mexicans, those very men who had formerly scarcely ventured to look up to Montezuma, through excess of dread and respect, now hesitated not to heap abuse and maledictions on his head.

These demonstrations of popular fury were followed by their natural and disastrous results. A mingled shower of arrows and stones fell upon the ramparts with such rapidity and fatal effect, that before the Spaniards appointed to guard the person of Montezuma had time to protect him with their shields, the wretched king sunk to the ground

* Clavigero; Acosta.

severely wounded on the head by a stone, and also, though more slightly, on the arm and leg.* When they beheld their monarch fall, the Mexicans were horror-stricken at their own fearful deed. A revulsion of feeling operated upon them; and from the violence of stormy passion they passed to the stupor of gloom and despair. They considered themselves as sacrilegeous wretches, and fled from the spot in wild dismay, as if pursued by the vengeance of the gods.

Montezuma was immediately carried to his apartments by the Spaniards, who strove to administer every comfort under so severe and unexpected a misfortune. Cortes, with anxious solicitude, stood by the side of the wounded monarch, and endeavoured, by the most soothing words, to testify his regret and sorrow; but Montezuma seemed now suddenly to awake from an unnatural trance of forbearance and servility. His constitutional haughtiness, and fierce resolution, returned, as it were, to cast a halo over his departing moments. He felt himself a king, and resolved to act with the independence of a man. He repelled the consolations and friendly tokens of the Spaniards with scorn and indignation. His dormant pride returning with additional power in this hour of misery, he beheld, in its fullest extent, the degradation of his state, and fiercely determined not to survive his misfortunes. He felt the poignant shame of that life which was now but an instrument in the hands of his enemies, and an object of abhorrence among his own subjects. Death appeared to the despairing monarch the only refuge

* B. Diaz.; Solis.

from his woes, and thus he vigorously opposed all the remedies which the Spaniards adopted to prolong his existence. The wound in the forehead was sufficiently dangerous to excite apprehension,* but still it might have yielded to efforts of medicine and proper care, had not Montezuma, with persevering obstinacy, repelled every endeavour to protract the term of his disastrous career. In a paroxysm of anger, grief, and despair, he tore the bandage from his wound; peremptorily refused to take the offered nourishment, and eagerly seized any means of expediting his fate.†

Cortes was sincerely and powerfully affected by this determination of the wretched monarch. No persuasion, no argument, no vigilance, however watchful, could win him from his fixed purpose. It was evident that his end was fast approaching, and Cortes perceiving any effort to prolong his life now unavailing, turned his thoughts with additional zeal towards the conversion of the dying prince to the Christian faith. Father Olmeda exhausted all the resources of his eloquence and piety to persuade him to receive baptism, but all his exertions proved without effect; Montezuma was inflexible on this point, as well as in his resolution to die; and in a stormy conflict of passions that lasted three days, he at length expired, cursing his fate and his enemies, and making vows of vengeance against the Spaniards and his rebellious subjects.

Such was the tragic end of Montezuma the Second, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, the eighteenth of his reign, and in the seventh month of his captivity.‡ His loss was deeply and sincerely de-

* Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Chron.
† B. Diaz; Solis. ‡ Clavigero.

plored by the Spaniards, whose affection he had won during his imprisonment, by repeated acts of generosity, and other noble qualities.* His character was a compound of virtues and vices, which are rendered conspicuous by a close examination of his actions. Though magnificent and liberal, he exercised these qualities often at the expense of his subjects, and his love of justice frequently urged him to acts of cruelty. That reserve, which was a leading feature in his character, exposed him to the imputation of duplicity, whilst it tended also to keep from his throne the complaints of his suffering subjects. This, added to the warlike disposition that distinguished his youth, and the success which attended his expeditions, which were necessarily unaccompanied by the moderation and humanity of more civilized nations, obtained for him in some places the appellation of tyrant, whilst by others he was considered in the strict light of a conqueror. He had by the power of his arms considerably extended his dominions, and completely routed his enemies in three great battles, besides several other engagements of lesser note. He became, however, in the last year of his reign so totally altered from his previous character and conduct, that his subjects accused him of having changed his sex.† Indeed, superstition had so far debased his mind, and the dreadful power of the Spaniards so effectually paralyzed his efforts, that from a daring and courageous conqueror, Montezuma had become a weak and irresolute prince. He had tastes which argued some refinement of intellect. He was extremely fond

* B. Diaz. † Clavigero.

of music, and delighted to investigate the causes of the superiority of the Spaniards. He was also very skilful in the use of his weapons, as well as partial to the exercises of the chase, and remarkably attentive to the cleanliness and ornament of his person. With regard to his outward appearance, he was of a good stature, rather thin, but well proportioned. His visage was long and oval, his eyes lively, and the expression of his countenance pleasing. Despite of his errors, many of which cannot but be greatly excused, on account of the difficulties that surrounded the last year of his life, Montezuma was esteemed as the greatest monarch that had yet governed the Mexicans.* Montezuma left several sons, three of whom ended their lives in the disastrous retreat of the Spaniards from Mexico; of those who survived, the most celebrated was Johualicahuatzin, or Don Pedro Montezuma, from whom the Spanish Counts of Montezuma and Tula claim descent.

As soon as the Mexican monarch died, Cortes sent a deputation to announce the mournful tidings to Prince Cuitlahuatzin, his successor in the throne. Shortly after the royal corpse was carried out by six nobles, and conducted to a place called Copalco, amidst the lamentations of the crowd, who now extolled to the skies that sovereign, whom a few days since they had considered totally unworthy both of his crown and life.† Sad privilege of mortality, to excite regrets and kindle friendly feelings, when regret is unavailing and compassion and respect afford no solace to the victim!

* B. Diaz. † B. Diaz; Clavigero; Solis.

A renewed endeavour which Cortes made at negotiation with the Mexicans, after the death of Montezuma, proved equally abortive with the former. The Indians intrusted with the message scorned to return with an answer from their fellow-countrymen, who, the day subsequent to the funeral obsequies of their late sovereign, returned to their attack on the Spanish quarters, with more impetuosity than ever. Cortes, having thus lost every prospect of accommodation with the Mexicans, saw the urgency of evacuating their city with the utmost expedition. But every moment brought new difficulties, and the situation of the Spaniards became truly lamentable. In Montezuma, they had lost the only pledge by which, however inefficient, they might hope to offer some check to the extreme violence of his subjects. Nothing now impeded the effect of their hatred, or could arrest their animosity. They quickly took possession of a tower in the principal temple, which commanded a view of the Spanish quarters. There they kept so vigilant a watch, that no Spaniard could move without exposing himself to immediate death from their weapons. So intent were the Mexicans on keeping this advantageous position, that five hundred of their chosen warriors, distinguished alike for their known courage and high rank, resolved to maintain it against every danger; and for this purpose they made every arrangement with regard to arms and provisions, as if they had expected a siege. Cortes was sensible that he must forego every hope of effecting a safe retreat, as long as he suffered his enemies to maintain their present station, and accordingly resolved to dislodge them at all hazards. This achieve-

ment he intrusted to the conduct of Escobar, a valiant officer; but notwithstanding the gallant conduct of the leader, or the courage of the numerous detachment by which he was attended, the Spaniards were compelled, after three vain attempts, to retreat into their quarters, without accomplishing their purpose.

Cortes now felt the whole weight of the misfortune by which he was so imminently threatened. He was obliged to strain his every effort, not for the reward of conquest, or the splendour of glory, but for the mere safety of his brave and devoted followers. Acting under this impression, he determined to conduct the assault against the Temple in person, though he was at the time suffering deeply from the wound he had received in a previous engagement. He immediately, followed by the flower of his troops, rushed to the attack, with valour and determination unparalleled even in his former exploits. Obstacles impeded the progress of the Spaniards on every side, while arrows and other missiles were literally showered upon them; the cavalry, upon which their chief reliance was placed, was soon found to be of no service, owing to the smoothness of the pavement in the courts of the Temple. At every charge the horse slipt and fell, whilst the fallen riders had the utmost difficulty to regain their position.* This inconvenience created much disorder and confusion; nor was the obstinacy of the enemy productive of less considerable mischief. They resorted to every practice which ingenuity could invent to annoy and distress the Spaniards. Besides their usual weapons,

* B. Diaz.

they employed several other means of aggression and resistance, hurling sometimes large fragments of stone from above, and at others burning beams, a rude imitation of fire-arms certainly, but one which, however inefficient in destructive power, tended nevertheless to produce much disorder to their enemy. Cortes in this emergency showed himself a hero.* He dismounted quickly from his horse, and ordering a buckler to be tied to his wounded arm, he rushed sword in hand into the thickest of the battle, calling aloud to his captains to follow his example. The intrepidity of the general produced the desired effect upon his troops. The Spaniards pushed forward with resistless impetuosity, and forcing gradually their way up the steps, they at length gained the ascent, and drove the Mexicans to the platform or upper area of the Temple. Here the contest raged with undiminished violence. The Indians seemed all determined to perish in the fight; and accordingly, during three hours, the combat raged with the most unparalleled fury. The priests, now calling franticly on their gods for protection, further inflamed the frenzied courage of the warriors, all of whom were either killed on the spot, or threw themselves from the tower, to escape being captured. The priests and the nobles in this place perished to a man, while the carnage in other quarters was proportionably frightful. Cortes at length got possession of the tower, when there was no one alive to defend it. He immediately set fire to the sanctuary; and having thus removed this serious obstacle to his future plans, now com-

* B. Dias.

manded a retreat into his quarters. No less than forty-six Spaniards were slain in this terrible assault, and every one had received wounds; they were covered with blood, and almost sinking through exhaustion. The number of the dead among the Tlascalan allies was very great, so that when Cortes attempted to retreat, he found fresh difficulties to oppose his progress, and new dangers to call for a further exertion of his courage. The Mexicans, with obstinate ferocity, assailed him in the lower area, and continued their furious attack in every street, and from every house. In this dreadful conflict, Cortes, by a desperate effort, succeeded in rescuing his friend Andres de Duero, whom the Mexicans were carrying away prisoner, having destined him no doubt for sacrifice.*

The spirited assault of the Spaniards on the Temple, and the equally gallant defence of the Mexicans, were considered of such high importance by the Indians, that it was commemorated by lively representations, in the paintings both of the Tlascalans and the Mexicans.† An interesting anecdote concerning this event is also related, which, as being liable to disquisition, I have been induced to place at the end of the chapter. It refers to the self-devotion of two Mexican youths of rank, who, perceiving Cortes on the point of obtaining his project in rendering himself master of the tower, resolved to sacrifice themselves for the good of their country, by involving in their own death the ruin of their enemy. With this intention they advanced towards Cortes, and affected to kneel down as if demanding quarter, when, suddenly seizing

* Solis. † Cortes, Relat.

him, they forced him to the edge of the upper area, resolved to hurl themselves therefrom, and drag the Spanish commander in their mortal fall. Cortes, however, by a desperate exertion of strength and agility, disengaged himself from their grasp, and the two Mexicans perished in their unsuccessful attempt.

This incident, so honourable to the patriotism of the two youths, is narrated by Raynal and Robertson, on the authority of Herrera and Torquemada, and it is also described by Solis. Clavigero, however, strongly contradicts it, and not without just reason. Neither Bernal Diaz, Gomara, and others, nor Cortes himself, make mention of such an event; and it must strike every one as remarkably singular, that all the *primitive* historians should have been ignorant of, much more have wilfully omitted, a circumstance which had so imminently endangered the life of the Spanish commander.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Disastrous Retreat of the Spaniards from Mexico, and Battle of Otompan, or Otumba.

THE Spaniards were now in a situation bordering on despair,—Montezuma was no more,—provisions had become extremely scarce,—the powder was nearly expended, and the Mexicans continued resolutely to reject every overture of peace. Many of the soldiers of Cortes had already been killed in the various engagements which had recently taken place; the greater portion of the rest were wounded, and all appeared sinking under the weight of accumulated misfortunes. The bridges had been broken down by the enemy, in order to render an escape impossible; and the Mexicans, almost worn out with their incessant attacks upon the Spaniards, seemed resolved to destroy by famine those men whom they could not reduce by arms. So fearful a doom, or the more horrible fate of being sacrificed to the idols, was the dark alternative offered to the followers of Cortes. That able and undaunted commander, revolving in his mind the idea of a retreat, now held a consultation with his officers, concerning the most prudent manner, as well as the most befitting time, of carrying this resolution into effect.

A diversity of opinions prevailed in the assemblage. Some strongly advised that the sally should be effected by day, when every danger could be clearly perceived, and more complete provision made against the efforts of the enemy. Others, on the contrary, contended that the darkness of night was preferable, as it would tend at once to conceal their movements, and take advantage of the superstitions of the Mexicans, which prevented them from attacking during the hours dedicated to repose. The latter counsel was unfortunately adopted, which was partly brought about also by the predictions of a soldier, who, claiming the pretensions of an astrologer, strongly advised his countrymen to undertake the retreat by night.* Whether Cortes was weak enough to be swayed by such chimeras, or, what is far more probable, whether he really conceived, by more rational deductions, that a nightly retreat afforded greater security, he adopted this course, and made dispositions for an immediate departure. He caused a portable bridge to be made, of sufficient strength to enable his army to pass the apertures, or ditches, in the causeways, which the enemy had made to prevent an escape. He then ordered all the treasure which had been collected to be brought forward, and having separated the fifth part belonging to the king, he made it over to the officers of the crown, absolving himself from any further responsibility on that head. The rest of these riches he left at the discretion of his followers, advising them, nevertheless, to postpone an acquisition of wealth to a more favourable op-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero; Solis.

portunity, rather than encumber themselves with articles which might prove prejudicial to their safety in the retreat.*

Hernan Cortes ordered then the plan of march. He intrusted the command of the van, consisting of two hundred of the boldest and most active soldiers, together with twenty horsemen, to the gallant Sandoval, aided by Diego de Ordaz and Francisco Lugo. The conduct of the rear, composed of the greater proportion of the Spanish troops, he committed to Pedro de Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon. Cortes himself, supported by Christoval de Olid and Davila, commanded the centre, where he placed the children of Montezuma, and other prisoners of distinction, the baggage, artillery, and the portable bridge to throw over the breaches in the causeway. The allied troops, from Tlascala, Chempoalla, and Cholula, amounting to several thousands, he distributed among the three divisions. The Spaniards commenced their disastrous and memorable retreat in a dark night, rendered still more gloomy and dangerous by a heavy mist and a fall of rain, which continued without intermission. These circumstances, which Cortes considered advantageous to his design, proved most disastrous in the event. Shortly after midnight the van left the Spanish quarters, and was followed in progression by the other divisions. Cortes directed his course in deep silence towards the causeway of Tacuba, because, being shorter than the others, and, on account of its remoteness from Tlascala, not calling so much the attention of the Mexicans, it afforded

* Clavigero.

greater chance of success in the present undertaking. The Spaniards arrived at the first breach without interruption, and proceeded to place the portable bridge, in the expectation that their intention was unknown, and that their safety would in a few moments be secured.

From these flattering dreams the retreating army was soon startled by a prodigious clamour which suddenly filled the air. The Mexicans had carefully watched the movements of their enemy, and the priests, with their horn, summoned the soldiers to arms. The sounds of warlike instruments and astounding shouts burst from every quarter. The lake, until then tranquil and still, appeared in a moment agitated by the motion of a thousand canoes. Showers of arrows and volleys of stones poured against the Spaniards without interruption, whilst an army, prodigious in numbers, and ferocious in purpose, thronged eagerly to the causeways, where they hoped to accomplish the destruction of the retreating foe. But a new calamity soon called for the attention of Cortes, and excited the dismay of his soldiers. The portable bridge was broken down by the weight of the baggage and artillery, and sticking fast amidst the stones and mud, it was no longer serviceable. Those of the Spaniards who had already gained the other side, hastened to the second breach, whilst their harassed companions endeavoured to scramble their fearful way, amidst a confused heap of cannon, luggage, armour, and the bodies of the dead and wounded, that now almost filled the horrid chasm. From this moment every thing became terror and confusion. The rain poured in torrents—the horses plunged, or remained res-

tive, so that many of their riders were compelled to abandon them. Both sides of the causeway were flanked with canoes, from which the enemy sent incessant flights of their missiles. The Spaniards in an instant found themselves surrounded by an infinity of enemies, who attacked them at once by sea and land with a fierceness they never before experienced. Their astounding yells—the sounds of their horns—the piercing cries of the captives, whom they were hurrying away in their canoes, all contributed to strike a chill of horror into the hearts of the stoutest veterans. The Spaniards fought with the fury of desperation, and many succeeded in passing over this fearful gap of destruction, and rejoined their companions at the second breach; but a greater number perished on the spot, were drowned in their attempt to save themselves, or were taken alive and reserved for sacrifice.

The conflict on the second breach was equally terrific. The Mexicans, in their previous attempt to accomplish the destruction of their enemy, threw themselves in tumultuous masses against them, crowding to the spot in such confusion, that an immense number fell victims to their own disorder. Cortes perceived the total impossibility of preserving any military discipline in the dreadful confusion which prevailed; friends and foes, soldiers and officers, horse and infantry, men and women, were crowded together, and the darkness and stormy rain increasing the disasters of the fight, all soon became one vast scene of carnage and horror. Cortes, and a considerable body of his veterans, united in a strong phalanx, and forced their way across the remain-

ing breaches, the dead bodies serving to fill up the ditches. When he had reached the firm land, and found himself in comparative safety, he left his slender troop with Sandoval and Olid, who had happily effected their escape, ordering them to keep in compact order, to resist any fresh attack. He then, with the vigilance of an able commander, and the magnanimity of a great man, passed and repassed the last breaches, sometimes swimming, sometimes climbing over the promiscuous and sanguinary heaps with which they were choked.* These unwearied efforts he performed at the imminent danger of his life; but the deplorable condition of his unfortunate followers seemed to augment the powers of his soul as well as the strength of his frame, in order to provide for their assistance. He encouraged some to persevere in their exertions—animated others to fight courageously—here aided them to reach firm ground, there to escape from the power of the enemy. How he was preserved from so fearful an accumulation of perils is not easily to be explained, unless by a strange concurrence of fortunate chances, and the extraordinary exertion of personal prowess.

But though he wearied himself in efforts to preserve his army, he perceived with agony the dreadful havoc which it had sustained. Some of his soldiers were overwhelmed by the number of the enemies, others were drowned or struggling in the lake, whilst he heard the piteous exclamations of the wounded, and the piercing cries of those who were carried away in triumph to be shortly sacrificed. In this mournful situation, he was joined

* Clavigero.

by a small troop, which he found to belong to the rear-guard. The party consisted of Alvarado, bleeding profusely, and scarcely able to stand, and about eight Spaniards and as many Tlascalans, all of them severely wounded, covered with blood, and exhausted by the desperate exertions which they had made to save their lives.* Alvarado informed Cortes that they were the only remains of the numerous detachment that composed the rear of the army—all the rest to a man, both Spaniards and allies, including the brave Velazquez de Leon, and other officers, being either slain or made prisoners by the Mexicans.† Alvarado further stated, that when he came to the third breach, not being able to face the thronging enemy, nor swim across without a certainty of being killed, by an effort of resolute despair he fixed his lance in the bottom of the ditch, and by its aid vaulted to the other side. This extraordinary leap, considered a miracle of agility, conferred on that place the name of *Salto de Alvarado*, or Alvarado's Leap, which it preserves to this day.‡ All the unfortunates who had been unable to escape in that night of sorrow, (*noche triste*) a title by which it is still known in New Spain, assembled in the way to Tacuba.

At the dawn of day, the Spaniards found themselves in Popotla, near Tacuba, strewn about at random, wounded, exhausted, broken down in spirit, dismayed at the recollection of the past, and in the dark anticipation of new disasters. A scene of uncommon distress offered itself to the

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.
‡ Gomara; Clavigero; Solis.

afflicted eyes of their commander. He beheld the wretched remnants of his gallant army dreadfully reduced in number, sinking under their calamities, and almost unfit for present service. More than one half of the Spaniards perished in this fatal retreat, together with four thousand of their allies. All the ammunition and artillery, as well as the baggage, was lost. Very few of the horses were saved, and a still smaller portion of the treasure. Indeed, the pernicious gold proved fatal to many of the soldiers, especially those of Narvaez, who having encumbered themselves with bars of it, sunk under its weight, the victims of their imprudent avarice.* Almost all the Mexican prisoners perished, and amongst them the Prince Cacamatzin, a brother, a son, and two daughters of Montezuma. Many Spanish officers of note were also missing. Of these, the most conspicuous were Francisco Morla, Francisco Saucedo, and Amador de Lariz, who perished bravely, overpowered by the enemy. But the loss which was perhaps the most deeply to be deplored, was that of the gallant Juan Velazquez de Leon, who, on account of his surprising merit, as well as great services, was considered the second chief in the expedition.† He commanded the extreme detachment of the rear, which being overpowered by the enemy, not a single man was suffered to escape alive.

So vast a calamity deeply wounded the heart of Cortes, and, despite his magnanimity of soul, he could not restrain the tokens of his affliction.

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.
† Cortes, Relat.; Gomara; B. Diaz; Clavigero.

In a gloomy mood, he sat down upon a stone in Popotla, and there, as he cast a mournful look on the shattered remnants of his army, and reflected on the brave companions and the friends he had lost, the tears of sorrow flowed unrestrained down his countenance. The death of Velazquez de Leon affected him deeply; for in that brave young man, he lost not only one of his most able officers, but a dear and devoted friend. But to past disasters, he was to add the gloomy anticipation of future calamities; he beheld many of his soldiers wounded, others enfeebled with fatigue, and all dejected with their recent catastrophe. Cortes, however, felt the necessity of fresh exertion; and whilst his heart was breaking with anguish, began to form the ranks; and his soldiers, to use the words of Robertson, observed with satisfaction, "that while attentive to the duties of a general, he was not insensible to the feelings of a man." Amidst so many disasters, however, he felt a comfort in seeing that his gallant captains, Alvarado, Sandoval, Olid, Ordaz, Davila, and Lugo, were alive, and that the faithful Doña Marina, and the interpreter Aguilar, as well as the venerable father Olmedo, had also escaped destruction.*

Hernan Cortes, though powerfully agitated by such an accumulation of misfortunes, with a greatness of soul which nature bestows upon few, now smothered his rising sorrow, and applied all the energies of his mind to devise means for the protection of his followers. All the country around was in arms against them. To take shelter from an immediate attack, he accordingly directed his

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Gomara, Chron.

march to Otoncalpolco, a temple which stood upon a rising ground, nine miles westward from Mexico, and which was afterwards converted into the celebrated sanctuary, or Chapel of our Lady of *Remedios*, or of succour. Detached parties of the enemy attacked the Spaniards in this shelter during the day, but they were uniformly repelled by the vigilance of the chief, as well as desperate courage of his soldiers. Cortes naturally conceived that he could not expect to keep for any considerable time his position, as the whole surrounding country would soon flock to an assault, which he could scarcely hope successfully to withstand, deprived as he was of artillery. Tlascala was the only place which seemed to offer a safe retreat in this emergency; but that city lay at a great distance, and in a contrary direction. Besides, he well anticipated that the Mexican army would already be assembled in the road to cut off this last resource. Whilst he was deliberating with his officers, a Tlascalan offered to conduct the army through by-paths and secret defiles to his own country.

The Spaniards undertook this toilsome march through a dreary and barren country, in some parts marshy, in others rugged and mountainous; in all thinly inhabited, and scarcely cultivated. The hardships which the Spaniards endured in their progress were as severe as they were prolonged. During six days that they marched without intermission, they were constantly harassed and annoyed by flying bodies of the Mexicans. An incessant and painful watch, an undaunted resolution, could alone guard them from their numerous attacks. Nor were these the only calami-

ties which they had to encounter; others of a still more painful nature assailed them on every side, and became daily more insupportable. To the danger of uninterrupted conflicts, and to the toils of an incessant march, they had to add the evils of a barren country, from which they could gather no provision, being obliged to silence their craving appetite with the roots of the earth, berries, and other wild fruits. When they arrived at Zacamolco, they were reduced to such utter famine and distress, that they eagerly devoured a horse which had been killed that very day by the enemy. The Tlascalans threw themselves on the ground, imploring piteously the assistance of the gods, while they fed upon the herbs of that earth on which they lay prostrated.*

But in the midst of such numerous and appalling distress, there was one consideration to support the sinking spirits of the Spaniards. Whilst subjected to incessant dangers from the enemy, and whilst labouring under the combined calamities of thirst, hunger, and fatigue, they observed the looks of their magnanimous leader undaunted, and his fortitude unshaken at those dire reverses of fortune. His mind appeared equal to every difficulty—his frame adequate to any exertion. He seemed to find new resources in his own breast against the repeated blows that conspired to overpower him; and, far from bending beneath the oppressive weight, resolutely struggled against the unnatural pressure. The soldiers saw this, and the noble conduct of their general produced a corresponding influence upon their own. On the

* Clavigero.

sixth day of the march, Cortes arrived near Otompan, and he observed several flying bodies of Indians, who, amidst other terms of contumely and indignation, constantly cried out—"Advance, advance, robbers, to receive the reward of your crimes!" An extensive valley was soon expanded to the view, and far as the eye could reach, a thick mass of armed warriors appeared. This prodigious army was composed of the soldiers of Mexico, Tezcuco, and Tacopan, and headed by the nobility of the country. Whilst a detachment of Indians had harassed the Spaniards in the rear, all the rest of this innumerable multitude had proceeded directly to the plains of Otompan, which they anticipated the enemy must pass in their progress to Tlascala.

At this formidable prospect, the Spaniards were no less astonished than alarmed. Even the stoutest hearts began to droop, and every one surmised that the moment of their doom was approaching.* Cortes saw the urgency of bold, prompt, and desperate exertion; and without allowing the minds of his men to speculate on the extent of the threatened danger, he formed the wretched remains of his army, flanking the wings with the few horsemen he could still command. Then, with a look of animation, and a voice full of enthusiasm, he cried aloud—"The moment is arrived when we must either conquer or perish! Castilians, arouse your spirit, place your confidence on high, and advance boldly to the charge!" The conflict was terrible—the Indians fought like frantic men, stimulated at once by superstition

* Cortes, Relat.

and revenge—the Spaniards used the giant efforts of brave human nature on the borders of despair. The small but compact battalion of Cortes broke several times through the unwieldy and massy multitudes that covered the plain. But this was of little avail, for whilst one side was routed and dispersed, another formidable body charged the Spaniards from a different quarter. The exertions of desperate courage, and the patience of fortitude, were inadequate odds against the renovated charges of enemies, all equally ferocious, and equally fresh for the encounter. After four hours' fierce engagement, Cortes beheld with dismay his army decreasing, and the rest of his followers almost unable to continue the contest through exhaustion and loss of blood. It was now he recollected to have heard that the Mexicans were thrown into confusion when they perceived their general slain, and the standard borne away by the enemy. He formed the daring attempt of trying the perilous expedient as a last resource. He perceived Cihuacatzin, the general of the Indian army, arrayed in a rich habit, bearing a gilded shield, and carried on a litter by some of his soldiers. The standard was tied to his back, and was seen some feet above his head. A select body of warriors were appointed to guard this sacred emblem, as well as the illustrious bearer.

Cortes resolved to strike the desperate blow, and desired his brave companions, Alvarado, Sandoval, Olid, and Davila, to follow close, and protect him from attack; whilst he himself, with a few resolute men, rushed forward, and plunged with heedless impetuosity amidst the thick mass of his enemies. He seemed to have collected all

the energies of his mind, all the powers of his frame, for that decisive attempt. He overthrew the enraged foes that opposed his headlong career; and being efficiently seconded by his companions, he at length reached the centre of the army where the standard was seen. In a moment he came up to the general, and with one stroke of his lance stretched him on the ground. One of the brave and self-devoted Spaniards who accompanied Cortes in this daring exploit, quickly alighted from his horse, wrenched the standard from the possession of Cihuacatzin, and put an end to his life. The enemy, discouraged by this reverse, were soon thrown into confusion, whilst the almost despairing Spaniards, feeling their hopes suddenly revived, rushed to the conflict with fresh vigour, routed and pursued the foe, and achieved one of the most splendid victories recounted in the conquest of the New World.*

In this battle, both Spaniards and their Tlascalan allies distinguished themselves in an extraordinary manner—none more so than Hernan Cortes. To his exertions was success especially to be ascribed; and, according to his officers, they had never seen such a vigorous display of courage, magnanimity, or activity, as that afforded by their general on that memorable day. Sandoval, also, according to the testimony of Bernal Diaz, himself a very brave man, merited particular praise for his gallant conduct; and some historians bestow warm encomiums on a woman called Maria de Estrada, who, armed with a lance and shield, was seen in the midst of the enemy exhibiting a

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.

degree of intrepidity rare in the stronger sex, and extraordinary in her own. The loss of the enemy was very great. Some authors computed it to be no less than twenty thousand men; a number which Solis supposes may be correct, considering that the enemy amounted to two hundred thousand men. Probably there is much exaggeration in both statements; but there can be no doubt that the army must have been immense, if we pay attention to foregoing events and their sanguinary nature. Nor was the victory purchased at a moderate expense, the greater part of the Tlascalans having perished, as well as a considerable number of Spaniards. Every one of the survivors came off wounded, Cortes himself having through his daring received a severe blow on the head, which growing worse, afterwards brought his life into the most imminent danger.*

The Spaniards, however, by this great victory, were saved from despair, and pursued their march without molestation into the Tlascalan territories, which they entered on the following day, the eighth of July; the first of the same month being rendered memorable by their fatal retreat from Mexico. Their number was now reduced to four hundred and forty men—all the rest having perished in their departure from the capital, and the seven toilsome days that followed that disastrous event. The Spaniards entered the Tlascalan dominions, at once victorious and in the most deplorable condition—wounded, exhausted, depressed, their general in danger, and their hopes destroyed. To abandon their enterprise and return to Cuba, seemed the only alternative left in their misfortunes.

* Clavigero.

CHAPTER XIX.

Events previous to the Siege of Mexico.

THE Spaniards were received by their Tlascalan allies with a degree of sympathy for their calamities highly creditable to them. Their fidelity, far from being shaken by the late disasters of these beings whom they had once considered invincible, seemed to have increased in proportion to their distress. But these friendly cares, though they contributed to lighten part of the load that oppressed the mind of Cortes, could not remove the darkness of the horizon by which his prospects was bounded. The discontent of many of his followers became daily more apparent; nor could he blame those murmurs which were produced by such dire misfortunes, and a total abandonment of hope. The soldiers of Narvaez were eager to renounce so severe and perilous a service, and return to their peaceful habitation in Cuba. Andres de Duero, in particular, dismayed at the scenes which he had lately witnessed, was anxious to avoid their repetition, which he could not but consider as unavoidable should Cortes be tempted to persevere in his desperate undertaking.* A

* B. Diaz.

powerful party was soon formed, who, judging that nothing now remained but to relinquish an enterprise in which they had embarked without a sufficient force, presented a solemn remonstrance to their leader, demanding permission to quit the invaded country.

Hernan Cortes listened to their representations with sentiments of deep sorrow, which he endeavoured to disguise under a show of composure. He well perceived that the complaints of his followers were founded in justice, nor could he blame them; yet though his army had been so dreadfully reduced, and though the remainder was in a most deplorable state, the magnanimous heart of the commander was unbroken and unsubdued. With a fortitude, of which we find few parallels in history, he still clung to his original idea of subjecting the vast empire of Mexico to the Spanish power. His recent disasters, severe as they had been, could not chill the ardour of his spirit, or darken the glittering hopes which he had formed. He was, therefore, firmly resolved on prosecuting his original design, and all the powers of his mind were now called into action to devise the means. His first care was to calm the discontent discernible in his followers, and for this purpose, before disaffection had ripened into tumult, he resolved to bring his little army into the field.

The people of Tepejacac had sworn alliance to Cortes, but no sooner did they perceive that he was subject to reverses of fate like any other mortal being, than they treacherously rose in arms against their late friends, and cut off a considerable body that were marching from Chempoalla to Mexico. Cortes resolved to chastise this conduct,

and used every effort to persuade his men to second so just an undertaking. The followers of Narvaez agreed at length, though reluctantly, to take a part in this expedition, as the Spaniards who had been slaughtered by the Tepejacacans belonged to their own party. Cortes could still depend with implicit confidence on the fidelity of the Tlascalans, who seemed every day more attached to the Spaniards, and of whom the four principal chiefs of the republic, besides a considerable number of inferior men, had lately solemnly embraced the Christian faith. He selected, therefore, a division of four thousand men, and took in person the command of the expedition.

The Tepejacacans were soon brought to subjection, and Cortes proceeded to their principal town. This district being fertile, and on the road to Villa-Rica, he established in it a settlement which he called *Segura de la Frontera*. He next occupied himself in several excursions, which tended in some degree to advance his designs, and, what was of still greater moment in his present situation, materially contributed to divert the attention of the disaffected from their wishes of returning to Cuba. He pursued this line of conduct for several months, and in every engagement his intrepidity was attended with success. These partial conquests and minor advantages, however, were insufficient to hold out any certainty with regard to the reduction of Mexico. Cortes had long revolved in his mind the difficulties which presented themselves towards a successful siege of that capital. The peculiarity of its situation threatened to baffle the endeavours of the most vigorous enemy, even if possessed of a force com-

potent to the enterprise. Cortes foresaw he could scarcely indulge his expectations of success, as long as he could not command an entire possession of the lake. To obtain, therefore, so desirable an object, he had given orders for the construction of twelve brigantines, by the aid of which he conceived all his intentions would be fully answered.* He commanded a sufficient quantity of timber to be cut in the forests of Tlascala, and intrusted the direction for the building of those ships to Martin Lopez, who was then considered an excellent shipwright. In this instance, Cortes exhibited the fertility of his genius, no less than the strength of his perseverance, in a most striking manner. Fortune likewise seemed to smile on his efforts, for he had considerably augmented his army by two small detachments of Spaniards who had unexpectedly landed on the coast. The first of these arrived in a vessel at Villa Rica, sent from Cuba by Diego Velasquez, and commanded by his lieutenant, Pedro Barba. This chief was attended by thirteen soldiers and two horses, and brought letters to Narvaez, with strict injunctions to send Cortes, if alive, to Cuba, that he might be conveyed in fetters to Spain; such being the command of the Bishop of Burgos.† Barba and his followers, totally unacquainted with the result of the expedition of Narvaez, were artfully decoyed on shore by the governor of Villa Rica, immediately secured, and sent prisoners to Cortes. This general received them as countrymen and friends, and trying again his power of persuasion, he was not long in inducing the new-comers to join his

* Cortes, Relat. † B. Diaz.

standard. Barba farther informed Cortes, that another vessel, laden with stores and provisions, would shortly appear on the coast. It was circumvented in the same manner as the former, and supplied an addition to the strength of Cortes.*

But the most considerable reinforcement was afforded by Garay, governor of Jamaica. The expedition of his lieutenant, Pineda, to establish a settlement on Panuco, had terminated in the destruction of that captain and all his men. Another ship was sent under Camargo, in order to second the operations of Pineda; but this second body of Spaniards, learning the disastrous end of their companions, and being at the same time afflicted with dreadful distempers peculiar to the country, had been induced to take refuge among their countrymen at Vera Cruz. They then proceeded to Frontera, where Cortes was at the time, and readily entered his service. Their example was also followed by other bodies sent over by Garay, in the firm persuasion that his intended colony at Panuco had been established, and continued in a flourishing state.† From these additions, the force of Cortes had received an augmentation of a hundred and eighty men and twenty horses; a reinforcement too considerable, under existing circumstances, to be lightly passed over. To these fortunate events were added the uniform success which attended the partial excursion of Olid and Sandoval; all which contributed at once to extend the reputation of Cortes for courage and benevolence, that commander using every gentle

* B. Diaz; Solis.
† Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz.

means in order to conciliate the good will of the natives, rather than intimidate them into subjection. From these several causes, the situation of the Spaniards had been so materially improved, that their general began again to cherish the most sanguine expectations with respect to the fortunate issue of his enterprise.

But in the midst of these favourable circumstances there was a constant source of disquiet in the mind of Cortes, from the ill-disguised discontent of a portion of his men. The smiling aspect which affairs had recently taken, was not sufficient to make many of the followers of Narvaez forget the severe trials to which they had been previously exposed. And they either looked on the enterprise as chimerical and absurd, or did not consider the reward which would attend the achievement as commensurate to the dangers and hardships by which it was to be obtained. The flame of discontent had been cherished in their bosoms, and though the persuasion of their general, added to the stimulus of immediate peril, had obliged them on several occasions to disguise their feelings, and act with a resolution in accordance with the urgency of the moment, yet they invariably returned to the subject of complaint as soon as an opportunity offered itself. Such a state of feeling could not be contemplated by Cortes without uneasiness, and he resolved at length to satisfy the desires of the malecontents. He was aware that a lesser evil would result to his slender army from a reduction of its force, than would accrue to the expedition in general, by suffering the disaffected to infuse their pernicious influence among the rest of the soldiers. Besides, the reinforcement which his troops had gained from the men of Barba and

Garay, made Cortes the more willing to part with those of Narvaez, who had evinced a decided disinclination to continue in his service.

He accordingly issued a proclamation, signifying, that all those who were anxious to return to their dwellings in Cuba, were at liberty as soon as they might think convenient, and that every thing should be afforded towards their safe and convenient departure. The greatest number of the discontented availed themselves of this permission, whilst others, though perhaps secretly inclined to pursue the same course, were yet prevented either by shame, or admiration of the conduct of their general. Amongst the number of those Spaniards who shrunk from the heroic intrepidity of their more generous companions, and relinquished their claims to the glory of so grand an undertaking, the most conspicuous was, Andres de Duero, who, as the special friend of Cortes, merits particular reprobation. The Spanish general selected one of the best vessels of the armament which had belonged to Narvaez, for the purpose of conveying Duero and his companions to Cuba. At the same time he sent Diego de Ordaz and Alonzo de Mendoza to Spain, with secret instructions to serve as a check against the malignity of the Bishop of Burgos, and present the conduct of Cortes in the most favourable as well as the most dazzling light. He likewise dispatched Alonzo Davila, one of his principal officers, to Hispaniola, to give a faithful account of his proceedings and hardships to the royal audience, and use his best efforts with that court, and the brothers of the Order of Jeoromites, to espouse the interests of the expedition against the intrigues and misrepresentations of Velazquez and the Bishop of Burgos. At the same time, an-

other officer was sent to Jamaica, with a commission to enlist adventurers, and purchase horses and military stores.

These several missions being dispatched to their destinations, Cortes applied himself with greater alacrity to conclude all the arrangements preparatory to the siege of Mexico. He sent instructions to his confederate Indians to hold themselves in readiness. He next made a review of his forces, which, after deducting those who had returned to Cuba, owing to the several reinforcements received from the various quarters above specified, still amounted to five hundred and fifty infantry, among which were fourscore musketeers and crossbowmen, forty horsemen, and nine pieces of artillery.* To this strength was added an army of ten thousand Tlascalans, and other faithful allies. The timber for building the vessels being now ready, and the necessary cordage, cables, sails, and other rigging, brought over from Villa Rica, Cortes saw nothing now to retard the commencement of his expedition against the Mexican capital. In a consultation held previous to his departure, it was resolved to select Tezcuco for their head-quarters, as that city was the best adapted from its situation for making excursions and harassing the enemy.

Every preparation being concluded, Cortes began his march towards Mexico on the 28th of December 1520, six months after his fatal and memorable retreat from that capital.† But the Spaniards had already forgotten the disasters of that *night of woe*, in the flattering anticipations of more fortunate events.

* Cortes, Relat. † Ibid.; B. Diaz.

CHAPTER XX.

The Spaniards leave Tlascala, and Hostilities Recommence.

Mexico was at this time in a suitable state of defence. Cuitlahuitzin, who succeeded Montezuma on the throne, had rendered his short but glorious reign memorable, not only by his vigorous attack and rout of the Spaniards on the night of their retreat, but also by the efficient measures which he had taken to follow up successfully that first advantage. He had used unwearied exertions to instil sentiments of hatred and horror towards the invaders of their country, among the various provinces of the empire. At the same time, he neglected no endeavour to repair the devastation caused by the Spaniards in the capital, during their stay, and in bringing to the place every means of defence. He made fortifications, filled the magazines with weapons, and ordered long spears to be made, which being headed with the swords taken from the Spaniards, he considered a most efficient species of arms against the cavalry. But in the midst of these honourable exertions Cuitlahuitzin fell a victim to the small-pox, a distemper hitherto unknown in America, but which raged at the time, having been introduced by a slave who had come in the train of Narvaez.

The loss of Cuitlahuitzin was, however, rendered less fatal by the merit of his successor, Quauhtemotzin, or Guatimozin, as he is usually called. This prince, a nephew of Montezuma, though a very young man, possessed such daring courage and abilities for command, that at this critical juncture he was considered by his countrymen worthy of being their chief, and was accordingly called with one accord to the throne.* Cortes advanced towards Tezcuco without opposition, and entered that city the last day of the year. The place, however, wore a melancholy and suspicious aspect at the arrival of the Spaniards. The streets were completely deserted, and neither women nor children were to be seen—a clear indication of hostility. The inhabitants had busied themselves in carrying away their goods to the forests, or the borders of the lake, where they could be protected by their canoes, while the Lord of Tezcuco and many persons of distinction had taken refuge in Mexico.†

This flight served the interests of Cortes, for he soon learnt that Tezcuco was divided and affected by the spirit of faction, which circumstance he skilfully turned to his own advantage. The fugitive prince was represented as an usurper, who had murdered his elder brother, and owed his elevation to the influence of the present Mexican monarch. At the same time, a youth was pointed out as the rightful heir, and Cortes caused him to be immediately invested with the government. He further succeeded in his endeavours in persuading him to embrace Christianity—the prince was baptised, and received the name of the Spanish com-

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz. † B. Diaz; Clavigero.

mander, who stood godfather in the ceremony.* To strengthen the bonds of amity that by this means united him to the Spaniards, Cortes appointed Escobar and two other Spaniards to attend constantly on the prince. A treaty of alliance was entered into by the new Lord of Tezcuco, who engaged to afford every assistance in his power to the Spaniards in their attack on Mexico—a promise which he kept with religious fidelity.†

Cortes having arranged affairs in Tezcuco, determined to attack the city of Iztapalapan to take revenge on the aggressions of its former lord Cuitlahuitzin. He accordingly marched against that city at the head of two hundred and thirty-five Spaniards, and the whole of the Tlascalan forces. But the inhabitants, though they had recently obtained a reinforcement of eight thousand warriors, retreated to the canoes, or to the houses that stood isolated on the water, at the approach of the enemy. The Spaniards took possession of the town without the least impediment; and as the night was closing, they resolved to take up their quarters in the place. A rush of water from the lake suddenly created alarm. The inhabitants had planned a stratagem, which would have inevitably ended in the destruction of the Spaniards, had not these been timely warned of their danger by some Tezcucan allies. The citizens, in order to destroy the enemy, had broke the mole of the lake, and caused a terrible inundation in the city. The alarm was sounded, a retreat commenced, and Cortes escaped this peril with the utmost difficul-

* B. Diaz; Solis. † Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Cron.

ty; but though he only lost two men, one horse, and a few Tlascalans, this instance of the ingenuity of the enemy occasioned much inquietude.

But this partial evil was soon forgotten by the influence of more fortunate events. Ambassadors arrived from the cities of Mizquic, Otompan and others, to request the protection of the Spaniards for their inhabitants. Cortes behaved with uniform kindness to the Indian messengers, and gladly accepted any overture of peace and alliance, as he was sensible how conducive such conduct was to the furtherance of his designs. The Spanish commander next resolved to gain possession of Chalco and Tlalmamalco, two towns which were of great importance to the Spaniards, as they lay in the direct road of Tlascala, and their head-quarters at Tezcuco. He accordingly sent a strong detachment of more than two hundred men, under the command of Sandoval and Lugo, for the purpose of driving the Mexicans from these districts. By this means, Cortes would be enabled to keep an open communication with Tlascala, a point of material interest to him; for experience had taught him that the natives of that republic, who had been in the commencement so hostile to him, were ever afterwards his sincerest friends, as well as the most brave among his allies. This measure would likewise open a clear intercourse with Villa Rica. Sandoval proceeded to the discharge of his commission, which he executed with perfect success, the inhabitants of Chalco being strongly inclined to join Cortes, but yet not daring to attempt to shake off the Mexican yoke.*

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

The materials for the construction of the brigantines being now ready, Cortes resolved to bring them, without loss of time, from Tlascala. The success of the siege so materially depended on the vessels, that he was anxious to provide for their safety, and accordingly intrusted this important commission to Sandoval, with a considerable force, to serve as an escort, in conjunction with the warriors of Tlascala. He further instructed that officer to proceed at the same time to Zoltepec, and chastise its inhabitants for the massacre of the forty Spaniards, and three hundred Tlascalans, who were surprised in their way from Vera Cruz to Mexico, at the time that Cortes was hastening thither to the aid of Alvarado. Upon the approach of Sandoval, the Zoltepecans betook themselves to flight, and though they were pursued, only three were killed by the Spaniards, their leader having taken compassion on those he had made prisoners.* On his entering the town, however, objects struck his sight well calculated to move at once his compassion, and excite a desire of revenge. The Spaniards found the walls of the temple and the idols besmeared with the blood of their unfortunate countrymen. The skins of two human faces, with their beards, were hung as trophies upon the altars, as were likewise those of four horses. On a wall of one of the houses, an inscription was written to the following effect:—"In this place, Juan Zuste and his wretched companions were confined."† These mournful remains aroused the indignation of the Spaniards; but fortunately they found no objects on whom to expend their rage, the place

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.; Solis.

being deserted by the men, while women and children, with piteous cries, implored the compassion of their irritated foes; and Sandoval, moved by the expression of their sorrow and repentance, promised them that he would pardon the men, if, by their future obedience and conduct, they endeavoured to efface what was past.*

From Zoltepec, Sandoval proceeded to Tlascala, where he found the materials for the brigantines ready for transport. A great army of Tlascalans under Chichimecatl were prepared for departure. No less than eight thousand *tamenis* were employed in carrying the timber already shaped, together with the cordage, sails, and other rigging. Sandoval disposed his march with a prudence and skill that could scarcely be expected from a young officer of three-and-twenty. He sent a strong detachment of Spaniards as an advance-guard, flanking the sides of so numerous a procession with small parties. During his march, several flying bodies of Indians appeared in the distance, but dared not approach to offer battle, and Sandoval had the satisfaction of discharging his commission without the slightest loss or mischance. Nothing could exceed the joy and military ceremonial upon their entry into Tezcuco. Cortes, attended by all his officers, attired in their best apparel, came in advance to meet the convoy. His satisfaction was expressed in a most lively manner. He embraced Chichimecatl and two other chiefs, and thanked them for their valuable services and fidelity. No less than six hours were spent in entering Tezcuco. It was a day of re-

* B. Diaz.

joicing, and anticipated conquest. The allies marched dressed in their best attire, decked with gay plumes, sounding their horns, and striking joyfully their drums, while the shouts of *Castile* and *Tlascala* rose in the air amidst the strains of the military instruments.

Martin Lopez, a shipwright, having declared that twenty days would be occupied before the vessels could be launched into the lake, Cortes resolved to keep his men in activity previous to the siege of Mexico, by several partial expeditions against the neighbouring cities which were strongly attached to Guatimozin. Having intrusted the command of Tezcuco to Sandoval, Cortes conducted this excursion in person, attended with an efficient detachment of Spaniards, and the whole force of the Tlascalans, under Chichimecatl.* The Spanish commander attacked the cities of Xaltocan and Tacuba; the first of which was plundered and partially burnt down; then returned to Tezcuco, having successfully achieved all his designs; by which means he had carefully weakened the resources of the Mexicans before he ventured to lay a regular siege to the capital. It seemed as though fortune had again taken the Spaniards under her protection, who had so severely experienced her frowns. About this time, another detachment of Spaniards arrived at Tezcuco, proceeding from Vera Cruz, where they had landed. The vessel that brought these men, who were commanded by Julian de Alderete, was loaded with military stores. This circumstance may throw some light over the obscurity in which his-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero.

torians have left this point. It is probable that this reinforcement proceeded from Hispaniola, where, as it has been stated, Cortes had sent an officer to recruit, and purchase the necessaries of war. Alderete brought the joyful tidings that the Bishop of Burgos had been deposed from his authority over the West Indies;* intelligence which was considered by Cortes as an event equal to the most signal victory. This circumstance, added to the late successes of the Spanish arms, and the recent exploits of Sandoval, who had completely routed the enemy at Huaxtepec and Jacapichtla,† contributed to increase the enthusiasm of the Spaniards, and their eagerness to commence the siege of Mexico.

But Cortes, with his usual policy, was desirous to attempt a negociation before he proceeded to the most dreadful extremity of war. He conceived that the Mexican monarch might be induced to listen to amicable propositions, on the strength of the reverses which he had lately sustained, and the imposing attitude which the Spaniards were daily assuming. He felt, besides, anxious to render himself master of the beautiful capital of the empire, without subjecting it to the havoc and destruction consequent on a protracted and desperate siege. Guatimozin, however, scorned to listen to any overtures of peace; and Cortes found that he had nothing to hope, but complete success by the force of arms, or total ruin. Under this impression he continued the hostilities preparatory to the siege with additional vigour. He proceeded to the conquest of Quauhnahuac, a populous

* B. Diaz. † Clavigero.

and handsome city, but strongly defended by the peculiarity of its situation. It was surrounded on one side by steep mountains, and, on the other, by a prodigious hollow, watered by a small river. A great perplexity arose concerning the most convenient quarter to attempt the assault, as the bridges had been raised, and no place seemed practicable. Meantime the enemy continued to annoy the Spaniards with showers of arrows and other missiles. At length, having searched in vain for the means of passing the ravine, Bernal Diaz, and some other soldiers, both Spaniards and Tlascalans, ventured upon an expedient, as hazardous as it was ingenious. Having discovered two large trees, which grew on the opposite sides of the ravine, and were, in some measure, interwoven with each other, these daring men crossed over by this precarious passage, but not without imminent danger. Indeed three of them fell into the ravine, and were severely wounded. The enemy, so unexpectedly attacked, made but a feeble resistance, and fled into the adjacent woods and rocks.*

Cortes next directed his attention towards Xochimilco, a large town on the lake of Chalco. Here the Spaniards met with a prodigious multitude prepared to oppose their progress. They had cut down the bridges, and made themselves strong by constructing parapets and palisades; but many of the soldiers got across by swimming, in which attempt several were drowned. The combat was extremely fierce and well disputed, and the Spanish general was on the point of losing his life. His horse having fallen under him among a

* B. Diaz.

numerous party of the enemy, he was knocked down, and a throng pressing forward, they succeeded in securing him, and were carrying him off in triumph. But at this awful moment, Christoval de Olid rushed forward at the head of a body of Tlascalans, who came in time to rescue him from inevitable doom. Cortes and Olid received wounds on the head, but were enabled to escape from the foes that pressed around them by the efforts of their men, who viewed, not without dismay, the perilous situation of their general, and exerted themselves in an extraordinary manner on his behalf.

Cortes remained three or four days at Xochimilco to recover from the fatigues of the preceding actions. Many of his soldiers, including himself, Alvarado, and Olid, were wounded, and required to be immediately tended, lest their wounds, from exposure, should render them unfit for future service, as had already happened in the case of some of his followers. During his stay, however, he was constantly harassed by fresh attacks from the Mexicans, in one of which they surprised and took alive four Spaniards, who had imprudently separated from their companions in their anxiety to sack one of the houses on the lake. The Mexicans came in canoes, surrounded the place, and carried those unfortunates in triumph to the capital. Guatimozin examined those Spaniards concerning the strength of their companions, after which he ordered their hands and feet to be cut off, and in this mutilated condition he caused them to be paraded about the surrounding country. This was soon after followed by a cruel death, which he commanded to

be inflicted upon them.* The fate of these men affected their general in an unusual manner. At the same time that it afforded a striking proof of the implacable ferocity of his enemies, it awoke in his mind the most gloomy reflections concerning the dismal doom to which he himself and all his brave companions were continually exposed. Despite of his extraordinary firmness, he could not suppress an involuntary shudder when he considered that he had been himself on the point of falling a victim to the same cruel destiny. Indeed, nothing could exceed in horror the fate of the prisoners who fell into the hands of the Mexicans; and the stoutest might well fear the anticipation, however remote, of his heart being torn out alive to be offered to the idols, and the rest of his body to be cut in pieces, and sold and devoured as the flesh of the brute creation. But it was the fate of Cortes never to experience fear until the danger was past. His impetuous intrepidity hurried him on; and, not satisfied with the glory of a great chief, he even seemed ambitious to dispute the merit of the common soldier. When the heat of the fight was over, and his lucid mind had time for reflection, then it was that he trembled at the imminent danger to which his temerity had exposed him, and for the success of that enterprise of which he was the soul and chief support.

* B. Diaz.

CHAPTER XXI.

Conspiracy against Cortes, and last Arrangements for the Siege.

While Hernan Cortes was devoting the whole powers of his mind, and every exertion of activity and courage to lessen the power of the Mexicans, and facilitate their subjection, all his efforts were on the point of being overthrown from a source that could hardly be anticipated. A conspiracy, no less horrible than dangerous, had been secretly formed against his life; and the fruit of so much labour and heroism, genius and perseverance, was about to be rendered void by the machinations of traitors. The followers of Narvaez had never been thoroughly imbued with the generous sentiments of Cortes's original companions. Though brave and resolute, in cases of emergency, they uniformly manifested their discontent at the protraction of dangers, hardships, and calamities, for which they had not come prepared. They had left their peaceful dwellings at Cuba, in the expectation of achieving conquests with that facility which had marked the previous career of the Spanish arms in other portions of the New World.

But, when they perceived their error—when they discovered that instead of easy triumphs, they

were subjected to incessant danger and severe service, and that, far from finding an enemy ready to yield a bloodless victory, they met everywhere with a ferocious and warlike race, undaunted in courage, and not to be broken by misfortune or defeat, they began to consider the attempt of reducing them as chimerical, and continually repined at the share which they were compelled to take. Neither the merit and popular character of Cortes, nor the magnanimous fortitude of his gallant companions, could be a sufficient counterpoise for the less generous feelings which actuated the hearts of the other Spaniards. The disaffection of those men naturally increased in proportion as the difficulties of the intended siege approached. The implacable ferocity of the Mexicans, and the resolute disposition of their king and chief, made them suppose that nothing but a series of carnage, ruin, and devastation, was preparing for both parties. The reduction of a city defended by its peculiar situation, and an almost innumerable host of fierce warriors, should it be achieved at all, could only be purchased by a protracted, no less than a sanguinary contest.

To these considerations others of an equally fatal tendency were added. Many of the followers of Narvaez had never been sincerely attached to their new commander. The prospect of acquiring wealth, or completing easy conquests, had induced them to enlist into the service of a leader whom they considered fully competent to conduct them to success. But while they paid a tribute of admiration to the merit of Cortes, their hearts were not bound to him by the ties of real attachment. Among so many men who had belonged to

an expedition fitted out against that commander by Velasquez, it is not strange that several should be found still cherishing the sentiments which had inspired the governor. Cortes was accordingly considered as acting without a constituted authority by the secret adherents of his former employer, and the time that was not imperiously occupied in attacks or measures of defence, was fatally employed in irregular debate and censure. But now that the voice of fear was added to the ill-silenced accents of discontent, the conduct of Cortes appeared more culpable, and the prospect of success more improbable.

There was in the army a private soldier named Antonio Villafaña, a man of resolute character and an intriguing disposition. This individual being strongly devoted to the interests of Velasquez, and averse to the proceedings of Cortes, secretly fomented the spirit of revolt with which some of the soldiers were affected. By his artful endeavours this fatal disposition began to extend, until the success of his first manœuvres emboldened him to project a more daring and diabolical design. The minds of the malecontents being thus prepared for a desperate act, clandestine meetings were held in the apartments of Villafaña, who declared to his companions that all their evils might be remedied by the death of Cortes and his principal adherents. The horrid idea was readily welcomed by the traitors, who immediately bound themselves to the conspiracy, and, affixing their signatures to a document presented by its author, promised to exert themselves most zealously in increasing the number of associates. By the skilful exertions of these men, the list was daily in-

crossing, till at length they had obtained sufficient strength to put their treacherous plan into execution. But when every thing was ripe for the intended blow, and inevitable destruction seemed to hang over the heads of Cortes and his friends, fortune, which was so conspicuous in the career of that great man, came in good time to interpose against the threatened danger.

On the eve of the day selected for the perpetration of the scheme, a soldier, one of Cortes's original followers, came with much caution to the Spanish commander, earnestly requesting a private interview. This being granted, the Spaniard threw himself at the feet of his chief in the utmost perturbation, and disclosed the hellish plot in which he himself had engaged, but of which, touched at last with remorse at his guilt, no less than moved at the intended doom of his glorious commander, he had in time repented. The first mention of such a dark scheme filled Cortes with surprise and horror, but his emotion was considerably heightened when the whole plan and extent of the conspiracy was unfolded. It appeared that the traitors had decreed the assassination of Cortes, Sandoval, Alvarado, and his brothers, Olid, Tapia, the two Alcaldes, Marin and Ircio, together with B. Diaz del Castillo, and other soldiers, strongly attached to Cortes. They were to be massacred while at table; but the better to secure success to the plot, a letter was feigned to arrive from Vera Cruz, and as Cortes should be occupied in its perusal, he was to receive the fatal blow.* The command of the army was then to be given to a bre-

* Solis.

ther-in-law of Velazquez, and the different other posts were also to be filled by several of the followers of Narvaez. It further appeared, that as soon as the first crime was perpetrated, the conspirators were to sally forth at the cries of liberty, and oblige the newly-appointed leader to conduct them back to Cuba.

Cortes was sensibly affected at this fearful discovery, but his presence of mind and prudence did not desert him in so important a moment. He assumed the composure suitable to the occasion; and calling to himself Alvarado, Sandoval, and others of the intended victims, proceeded without loss of time to Villafaña's quarters. There he surprised the traitor and some of his associates, who, astounded at so unexpected a visit, afforded in the consternation of their looks, ample evidence of their guilt. Some of them attempted to escape, but were quickly seized by the attendants of Cortes, whilst the general himself laid hold of Villafaña, from whose bosom he snatched a paper containing the names of the conspirators. He cast a hurried glance over the dark document, and was struck with sorrow, no less than horror, at the extent of the defection, and the ingratitude of some of its members. But the conduct of Cortes in this crisis was such as bespoke a mighty, generous, as well as extraordinary self-possession. Instead of giving vent to a spirit of just revenge, he confined every violent feeling in the recesses of his own breast, and resolved to adopt that calm line of conduct which was advisable in this transaction. The accomplices of Villafaña who had been arrested, were consigned to prison, while their chief was immediately subjected to a trial. His guilt being fully established,

he was condemned to death, and on the following morning he appeared hanging before the door of his quarters.

Cortes then ordered the other prisoners to be set at liberty, and having assembled his troops, he imparted to them the atrocious design of Villafaña and his associates. He then made a skilful and impassioned oration on the heinousness of his crime and the justice of his punishment, adding, that he felt extremely gratified that the doom of the traitor fell on no other Spaniard, he having, upon his arrest, swallowed a paper, which was, no doubt, the list of his accomplices, whose names remained by this means buried in oblivion. Cortes, in making this declaration, kept his feelings under such control, that while some of his intended assassins stood before him, he never betrayed the slightest symptom of anger or revenge. By this master stroke of policy—by this strong dominion over his passions, he restored tranquillity to many a guilty heart; and he had the advantage of preserving the lives of a considerable body of men, which he could ill spare at the present juncture; besides, he was enabled for the future to keep a strict guard over the disaffected, while they, in their turn, observed a more laudable conduct in their eagerness to prove their zeal and remove any suspicion which conscious guilt attached to them.*

This fearful conspiracy being thus prudently crushed, Cortes, with great skill, endeavoured to divert the attention of his men from so painful a subject, to a speculation of a more animating na-

* Cortes, Rel.; B. Diaz; Herrera; Solis; Clavigero, &c.

ture. Observing that all his preparatory arrangements for the siege of Mexico were now concluded, and impatient to occupy the attention of his soldiers, he resolved to accompany the launching of the brigantines with the greatest pomp and solemnity. On the 28th of April, he assembled all his troops, both Spanish and Indians; and the former having attended mass, and received the communion, the whole army was drawn in military array along the banks of the canal. The vessels were solemnly blessed by Father Olmedo, who bestowed a name upon every one as they were launched. All eyes were fixed upon them with delight, as they considered them as the instruments of future success. Accordingly, when upon entering the lake, they hoisted their sails and began to plough the water, under a stirring salvo of artillery, *Te Deum* was sung, and a general shout of joy arose, mingled with the strains of martial music.* "All admiring," says Robertson, "that bold inventive genius, which, by means so extraordinary that their success almost exceeded belief, had acquired the command of a fleet, without the aid of which Mexico would have continued to set the Spanish power and arms at defiance."

Cortes then made a general review of his forces, as well as of the ammunition which he possessed to carry on the siege. He found himself at the head of eighty-six horsemen, and more than 800 infantry, together with three large iron cannon, fifteen small field-pieces, a great quantity of balls and arrows, and a thousand pounds of gunpowder. This strength, added to the numerous force which

* Cortes, Relat.; Gomara; Clavigero.

the Tlascalans and other allies brought into the field, he flattered himself would be fully adequate to the reduction of the great Mexican capital. Cortes then divided his army into three parts, to each of which he appointed a commander, and assigned the station in which it was to operate. He had resolved to invest the city by three different quarters, and accordingly made those arrangements which he considered most available to success. The towns of Tepejacac, Tacuba, and Cojohuacan, were situated in the causeways, and served to defend the capital from the first attacks. The three divisions of the army, containing nearly an equal number of Spaniards, were to establish themselves in these three points, to act under the immediate command of Sandoval, Alvarado, and Olid. To each of these officers he further allotted a numerous and equal body of the auxiliary Indians. As he considered the conducting of the brigantines to be the part of the undertaking of greater danger and importance, he reserved their command to himself, having provided each vessel with a small cannon, and manned it with twenty Spaniards.

All the Indian allies that were not immediately wanted were to remain at Tezcuco until there should be occasion for their services. The disposition which Cortes had made of his forces was such as to justify his prudence and abilities. He had intrusted the command of those three bodies to those officers who had invariably stood nearest himself in the various transactions of the expedition. Of their courage and merit he had received incontestible proofs, and they had been devoted to his interest from the commencement of

the enterprise. He took the conduct of the vessels, contrary to the opinion of his officers,* though neither the causes of this difference are known, nor those which induced Cortes to follow such a plan. The only solution which can be given is the one already afforded, the conviction that the brigantines were the chief support of the siege, and consequently the post naturally assigned to the general. Alvarado and Olid proceeded (10th May) to Tacuba with their divisions. The first object of their hostility was to destroy the aqueduct of Chapoltepec, as by this means they expected to reduce the Mexicans to great distress from the want of water.†

As soon as the Spanish chiefs had taken possession of Tacuba, they lost no time in putting their design into execution. But this plan was not to be accomplished without much danger as well as difficulty. With a foresight superior to the genius ascribed to the Mexicans, they had prepared every means of defence, and when the Spaniards proceeded to their task they found a formidable host prepared to oppose them. A brisk engagement soon took place, in which, after a short resistance, the Mexicans were repulsed, and retreated. Alvarado and Olid then cut off the pipes of the aqueduct, by which means the city was from that moment deprived of fresh water.‡ Encouraged by this first success, the Spaniards determined to take possession of the first bridge on the causeway of Tacuba, but on approaching the spot, they

* Clavigero.
† Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Chron.; B. Diaz.
‡ B. Diaz.

were astonished at the immense multitudes that thronged the causeway, no less than the number of canoes that covered the surface of the lake on both sides of the bridge. The Spaniards perceived they could scarcely hope to achieve their purpose; but with that reckless courage which characterized all their operations, they rushed to the attack. At the very first discharge of the Indian missiles, three Spaniards were slain and thirty wounded. The principal mischief wrought on the Spaniards proceeded from the incessant showers of arrows, darts, and stones, hurled from the canoes, the tenants of which being defended by high wooden screens, and under comparative security, they aimed at the Spaniards in a narrow passage, as at a certain mark. After continuing for some time in an unavailing attempt, Alvarado and Olid were compelled to relinquish their object, and commanded a retreat into Tacuba. In this action the Spaniards lost eight men, and had above fifty wounded.* This disaster checked the further progress of the two chiefs, who now resolved to observe only a defensive attitude, until Cortes should come up with the brigantines to second their attempts.

Alvarado took up his quarters in Tacuba, according to the instructions he had received; and Olid pursued his march to his station at Cojohuacan on the festival of *Corpus Christi*, which fell that year on the 30th of May; on which day, according to the statement made by Cortes, the memorable siege of Mexico commenced.

* B. Diaz.

CHAPTER XXII.

Prosecution of the Siege. Assault and Defeat of the Spaniards.

HERNAN CORTES having brought his flotilla into the lake, his first design was to attack an insular rock which stood contiguous to Mexico, and to which a vast number of the inhabitants had fled for refuge. Perceiving his design, the whole naval force of the enemy collected, and no less than four thousand large canoes advanced boldly against the brigantines. Cortes now took his vessels into the most open part of the lake, and forming them into the shape of a crescent, awaited the advance of the Mexicans. A brisk gale springing up, in a moment the sails were hoisted, and the vessels broke through the crowd of canoes without difficulty, oversetting a great number, and dispersing the rest of the inefficient, though numerous armament, with considerable loss.*

As soon as Olid discovered from the temple of Cojohuacan the conflict on the lake, he proceeded in order of battle along the causeway that led to Mexico, took possession of some trenches, and routed the enemy. Cortes, in the meantime, at-

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz.

tacked the bastion erected on the angle made by the conjunction of the roads of Cojohuacan and Iztapalapan. This place, called Xoloc, was defended by the Mexicans with great obstinacy, but was soon stormed and taken by the aid of two large cannon, which caused great havoc among the multitude that incumbered the road. No situation appeared to Cortes more advantageous than this for establishing his camp, and he accordingly selected it for that purpose, becoming by this means master of the principal road to the capital, besides having the convenience of being able immediately to communicate with the station of Olid's division. The next care of the Spanish general was to protect the three divisions of his army from the incessant mischief caused by the canoes, and to this end he distributed his fleet among the three quarters from which the city was to be attacked, giving orders to obey the instructions, and second the operations, of the chiefs who commanded those ports.*

From this moment an uninterrupted series of attacks and retreats, skirmishes and manœuvres, commenced. Alvarado made a fresh attempt every morning to penetrate into the city, and after a day of fierce contest, he was compelled to retrace his steps to Tacuba. As the causeway on this side was by far the shortest road to Mexico, it is not singular that it should be more carefully guarded, nor that there the engagements should be more frequent. The hardships consequent on so severe and uninterrupted a service, were enough to break down any spirit but those possessed of romantic enthusiasm, as well as inordinate ambition.

* B. Diaz; Gomara.

The Spaniards beheld their numbers decreasing by every fresh attack. They were compelled to fight without intermission, and to receive fresh wounds before the old ones had been healed; but no pretext could exempt a soldier from his duty, and he who in the preceding fight had received injury, returned in the morning to increase his misery or meet his death.* The danger was renewed every day, and fresh toil succeeded to the fatigue of the preceding exertions. The Mexicans repaired during the night the destruction which their enemies had effected in the day. Nor could the dreadful slaughter which marked every preceding engagement, calm the courage of those Indians, or tend to intimidate them from their implacable obstinacy of defence.

Another disappointment now succeeded—the destruction of the aqueduct of Chapoltepec, by which it was hoped to cut the supply of water from the city, was rendered of no avail, as that article was regularly supplied by the canoes from the towns on the borders of the lake. Nor was the idea of reducing Mexico by famine to be entertained, as every article of food was abundantly afforded by the same means. To check such resources, Cortes destined two brigantines to watch at night, and intercept the canoes with provisions; but this plan scarcely answered the intended effect. The Mexicans were shrewd in proportion to the exigencies for the exertion of their ingenuity, and they not only baffled, by the quantity of their canoes sailing in different directions, the designs of the enemy, but on one occasion decoyed the two

* B. Diaz.

brigantines to the borders of the lake, where they had thirty large piraguas in ambush. The stratagem succeeded, and the vessels were suddenly surrounded by the enemy in a situation where they could only manœuvre with difficulty. Every Spaniard was wounded; the captain of one brigantine was slain, and Pedro Barba, a person of consequence, and whose name has already appeared in this history, died shortly after of the wounds he had received.* The distresses of the Spaniards were augmented by the periodical rains, which now commenced. But this inconvenience in no manner suspended the hostilities, which were carried on with unabated vigour, daily attacks being made both by sea and land, without producing any decisive results. The division of Alvarado, however, had approached nearer to Mexico, from the shortness of the causeway of Tacuba; and the Spaniards, as they advanced, took special care to demolish the buildings in their way, the materials of which served to fill up every ditch and canal which obstructed their progress. It would be a tedious and uninteresting task to recount a repetition of skirmishes, fights, and manœuvres, which occupied every hour of the day on both sides. Suffice it to say, that by day, and in the darkness, by sea and by land, one danger succeeded another; and that the soldiers had not reposed from the toil of a severe duty, when they were summoned to sustain fresh hardships.

No less mortified than astonished at the protracted disasters of the siege, Cortes now resolved on a general assault. He commanded Alvarado

* B. Diaz; Solis.

and Sandoval to lead on their division, whilst he himself took charge of that stationed at Cojohuacan, and on the following day (July 3) the three several detachments of the army advanced to the attack. The Mexicans were on the alert, and a conflict equal in animosity to any of the former ensued. But the division of Cortes continued to gain ground, that intrepid commander carrying all opposition before him. In his ardour, however, he did not perceive that he had arrived at a part where the water was very deep, and the causeway had been narrowed. The Mexicans by a feint retreat tempted him to pursuit, until they had sufficiently drawn him into their toils. The Spaniards, with resistless force, had gained one barricade after another, and were congratulating themselves with the near approach of success, when Guatimozin ordered several detachments of the army to repair by different streets, and by water, to the grand ditch in the causeway, to cut off the retreat of the enemy. This manœuvre was successfully accomplished, Julian Alderte, the officer charged to fill up the ditches, having neglected his duty in his ardour to follow his companions. Suddenly the ominous sound of the great drum, together with the awful blast of the horn of the god Painalton, which instruments were used by the priest in cases of extreme public necessity, now summoned the Mexicans to redouble their exertions. The warriors, inspired to a sort of gloomy frenzy by those diabolical strains, hurried to the charge with a raging ferocity, and regardless of all danger. Cortes and his troop, who had arrived at the capital, alarmed by this general uprising, no less than astounded by the fearful yells, and pro-

digious uproar, as well as uncertain of the fate of his chiefs, Alvarado and Sandoval, considered it advisable to effect a retreat. This was accordingly attempted, with sufficient order in the commencement, but no sooner had the Spaniards arrived at the narrow portion of the causeway, and beheld the formidable host surrounding them, than the most dreadful confusion began to prevail, and the retreat assumed the aspect of a total rout.* Terror soon augmented the disorder, and horsemen and foot, Spaniards and allies, all plunged heedlessly into the fatal gap, offering an easy victory to the enemy. To increase the disasters of that mournful day, the brigantines could not protect the Spaniards, being prevented from approaching the causeway by strong pallisades, which the Mexicans had sagaciously fixed under water.

A horrible scene ensued. Amidst the shouts of frantic exultation of the enemy, Cortes beheld his men falling on every side; some unable to creep on by reason of their wounds, and many carried away in the canoes by the exulting Mexicans to be sacrificed. It was now that he exerted himself in an extraordinary degree. Not only his duties as a chief, but his feelings as a man, were deeply interested in this melancholy occasion. Unmindful of the imminent danger to which he was exposed, he strained every effort to save his sinking countrymen, cheering some, encouraging others, and protecting many by his own individual efforts. This conduct was highly creditable to his character, and tended to endear him to those soldiers of whose safety he appeared so solicitous on every

* B. Diaz.

occasion. In the midst of his magnanimous efforts, he received a wound in the leg, and shortly afterwards was seized by six Mexican captains, who, despite of his desperate struggle, were carrying him off in triumph. His doom appeared inevitable, when by one of those heroic feats of self-devotion which do honour to man, two brave Spaniards, called Christopher Olea, and Lerma, flew to the assistance of their general, and succeeded in rescuing him from the hands of his enemies. Olea killed four of the captains, and, covered with wounds, gallantly lost his life in preserving that of his chief; whilst Lerma was nearly sinking, when Quinoñes and several other Spaniards and Tlascalans came timely to extricate them from their dreadful situation. Cortes was lifted out of the water and placed on a horse, after which the shattered remains of his division effected their disastrous retreat with the utmost difficulty.*

Alvarado and Sandoval were not more successful in their attacks. The former was vigorously repulsed by the enemy, who, after the defeat of Cortes's division, crowded in greater numbers against the other two. But the Mexicans used stratagem as well as resolution and perseverance in the engagement. They threw five bleeding heads to the Spaniards, pretending that they belonged to Cortes, Sandoval, and other chiefs, and vaunting that Alvarado and his companions should soon meet with the same fate.† Dismay began to prevail, and every object round tended to confirm the fears of the Spaniards concerning the horrible catastrophe of the two other detachments, the dis-

* B. Diaz; Clavigero. † B. Diaz.

tance from each other preventing them from ascertaining their respective situations. Alvarado accordingly gave the word to retreat, which operation was accompanied with the same toil and danger that had attended the similar movement of Cortes.

Of the three divisions, that of Tepejacac, led on by Sandoval, sustained the least share in this misfortune. That gallant and intrepid commander had advanced victoriously, and already congratulated himself with the certainty of success, when the defeat of the two other commanders changed the fortune of the day. To his astonishment he found himself continually assailed by new enemies, who now resorted to the same stratagem which they had used in the case of Alvarado, throwing several gory heads, as those of that chief, Cortes, Olid, and others. Sandoval continued his exertions with dauntless perseverance, but at length, despairing of attaining his object, he retraced his steps, though in so orderly a manner that he brought his division to their quarters in safety, having only two slain, though several wounded, of whom, amongst the most severely, was himself.* In this disastrous assault above sixty Spaniards perished and fell alive into the hands of the enemy; also a great number of allies were slain, and the greater portion of the survivors came off with wounds. To this loss was added that of six horses, one cannon, and a considerable quantity of arms.†

Night came, not to afford repose and solace, but to supply new subjects of sorrow to the drooping

* B. Diaz.

† Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Chron.; B. Diaz; Clavigero.

spirits of the Spaniards. Though the conflict was ended, a prolongation of its horrors was fearfully rehearsed in the display of the enemy's triumph. The stillness of that gloomy night was disturbed by barbaric shouts of exultation, whilst its darkness was superseded by the glowing illumination of the temples and other edifices. The inhabitants were celebrating their victory with a frightful festival. The splendour which illumined the whole city enabled the Spaniards of the division of Alvarado, on the causeway of Tacuba, to see the priests hurrying about in all the bustle of preparation, for the sacrifice of their unfortunate companions. Suddenly the horrifying sound of the great drum, together with the horns and trumpets of the temple of the god of war, filled the air with their doleful notes; and the shortness of the distance of Alvarado's station enabled his men to be the melancholy spectators of the sanguinary and odious scene performing in the temple. They beheld their companions stript naked, and adorned with feathers, compelled by blows to dance before the idols to which they were shortly to be offered in sacrifice. They distinctly heard their piercing cries, mingling with the fearful uproar of the instruments, and shouts of joy of their enemies. They even fancied they could perceive the helpless victims stretched on the sacrificial stone, when their hearts were torn out, and offered yet warm and palpitating to the monstrous idol, whilst the bodies were thrown down the steps of the temple, to be feasted on by those to whom they belonged by right of capture. A pang of horror shot through the stoutest heart of the spectators at such a dismal scene, whilst even the most unfeeling could not refrain from tears of compassion. But

personal danger was added to human sympathy, and every one contemplated, with mingled sentiments of sorrow and dismay, a bloody spectacle in which they might themselves be actors at some future time.*

The state of mind of Hernan Cortes was distressing in the highest degree. Whilst he felt the recent disaster as deeply as any one of his followers, his station compelled him to check his feelings, and assume that calmness and composure which he could ill enjoy under such severe calamity. His fortitude was subjected to a dreadful trial, but the greatness of his soul bore him through. He knew that the least manifestation of despondency on his part would infect his followers with a most disastrous contagion. He summoned to his assistance all his powers, and though labouring under the accumulated pressure of defeat, exhaustion, and wounds, such a complication of misfortunes was neither sufficient to bend his heart, nor to make him relinquish the hopes of retrieving the great conquest he had undertaken. But the moment required an uncommon display of fortitude and magnanimity. Elated with their victory, and sanguine of a repetition of success, the Mexicans pursued the most active measures to the furtherance of their plans. They came to attack Cortes in his quarters, and though repulsed, yet their constant annoyance greatly distressed the Spaniards in their present deplorable condition.

But another source of anxiety came to distract the attention of Cortes, and augment his difficulties. The Mexicans had sent the heads of the

* Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz.

Spaniards who had been recently sacrificed, to the neighbouring towns and provinces, declaring to the inhabitants, that the gods, propitiated by the blood of the enemy shed on the altars, had promised that in eight days those hated invaders would be totally destroyed, and peace restored to the Mexican empire. The fatal effects of these predictions were soon manifest to the Spaniards. The superstition of the Indians induced them to give implicit credence to the prophecy, and aroused them to second the views of their deities. The provinces hostile to the Spaniards were more vividly inflamed. Those who had remained neutral now made common cause with the Mexicans, and the Indian allies began gradually to abandon their former friends. Even the Tlascalans were not proof against the general contagion, and Cortes soon found himself almost abandoned by his auxiliaries. But justice requires us to mention, that the brave Chichimecatl, and the brother of Tezcuco, together with other nobles, and about eight Tlascalans, scorned to forsake their former friends when they saw them in misfortune.*

In this critical juncture Cortes resolved to suspend hostilities, until the term appointed by the Mexican oracle should be accomplished. He made dispositions to be upon the defensive, and, protected by the brigantines, he remained the eight ominous days, patiently waiting the moment when the falsity of the prediction would be made apparent.

* B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Capture of Guatimozin, and Reduction of Mexico.

THE fated term passed, and the oracle proved false. The Spaniards remained undestroyed, and the Indians ashamed of their defection, flocked back to the standard of Cortes, with the same facility that they had forsaken it. By this means, and the addition of other tribes of Indians, the Spanish commander quickly found himself at the head of 50,000 auxiliaries.* At this time a vessel arrived at Villa Rica with men and ammunition, which article came most seasonably, as the Spaniards had nearly expended all their gunpowder, and were reduced to a great dilemma in consequence. On the arrival of this reinforcement, Cortes determined to pursue his operations against the Mexicans. He had already spent forty-five days in a desperate siege, and he was no less surprised than exasperated at the delay. He resolved, however, upon a different plan of attack, and, instead of the daring attempts which had marked his previous operations, he cautiously resolved to trust less to courage and more to prudence. He also gave up the idea of preserving the Mexican capital

* Cortes, Relat.

entire, for he determined upon a system of warfare frightful, though slow in its progress.

He caused the three divisions to advance, but in strict military order, and to demolish every house or building in their way, whilst the Indian auxiliaries carefully filled up the ditches, and repaired the causeways in the rear, to facilitate a retreat. This dreadful plan of operation was commenced and followed up with regularity, and the decided advantage which accrued to the Spaniards became soon apparent. Day after day the Mexicans found themselves circumscribed within more narrow bounds; but the undaunted resolution of Guatimozin was not to be checked by the fearful images that presented themselves to his view. He continued his vigorous resistance, and appeared determined to see the last house of his capital levelled with the ground, before he would suffer it to be possessed by the invaders. Alvarado and his division had, by this time, pushed their way to the great square of Tlalteloco, and that gallant officer immediately attacked the temple, where a great number of warriors, with the priests, seemed determined to make a desperate resistance. Alvarado conducted this manœuvre with as much skill as bravery. Besides, as he was uncertain how long his companions might be before they arrived at Tlalteloco, the place of general muster, it was indispensable to dislodge the foe from a situation which commanded it. The Spaniards rushed boldly to the attack, and after a severe conflict, they at length gained the temple, drove the enemy in confusion from the spot, and set fire to the idols, whilst the Spanish banner was plant-

ed triumphantly on the summit of the building, as a joyful signal to cheer the other Spaniards.*

The sight of that beacon of victory, greatly rejoiced Cortes and his companions, who now continued their progress with redoubled alacrity. At the end of four days, (July 24,) both that general and Sandoval made their entry into the Great Square. The difficulties of the siege now surmounted, no doubt was entertained of the success of the enterprise. Cortes being in possession of the western and principal part of the city, resolved to adhere to his present line of conduct, in reducing the rest of it to subjection; but before he continued his victorious and destructive course, he sent another message to Guatimozin. All the efforts of the Spanish commander, however, towards negotiation proved ineffectual, the Mexicans either refusing to listen to his proposals, or feigning to consent, only with the view of furthering some stratagem. Cortes was, accordingly, compelled to pursue the plan of operation which had already proved so advantageous, and a heap of ruins continued to mark the progress of the Spaniards. Nothing could exceed in horror the situation of the Mexicans. Every day numbers of them fell victims to their obstinate courage, while the survivors were only reserved to prolong the miseries of a wretched life. The brigantines having the total command of the lake, and the Tlascalans and other allies intercepting every communication, the unfortunate Mexicans soon found themselves entirely deprived of the necessaries of life, and the horrors of famine soon filled up the measure of their

* B. Biaz.

wretchedness. The want of nourishment produced infectious maladies; and the three most fatal plagues, that can inflict human nature, fell thus heavily on the devoted but unconquered Mexicans. Every night famishing wretches were seen near the Spanish quarters, prowling in search of food to silence their raging hunger.* But neither these horrid disasters, nor the sight of his beautiful capital in ruins, could change the fierce resolution of Guatimozin. All the city but a small retired quarter was now in possession of the Spaniards; but that still held out with a ferocious determination to dare the same fate of destruction.

Cortes now intrusted the command of the fleet to Sandoval, with instructions to invest that quarter by sea, whilst he himself would lead the assault by land. The Mexicans now perceived that the moment of their downfall was at hand; and endeavoured to persuade their king to quit a place which he could no longer defend, and fly to the distant provinces, where the war might be renewed. The better to effect this design, they attempted to beguile the Spaniards with feigned proposals of submission, thinking, that while Cortes was occupied with these speculations, Guatimozin might put his plan in practice without impediment. But the Spanish commander was neither to be deceived, nor surprised. His prudence and vigilance were never suffered to slumber, much less when the most important moment for their exertion was arrived. The obstinate defence and character of Guatimozin made him anxious to secure a leader, whose escape would be attended with serious in-

* B. Diaz.

convenience to the Spanish cause. His death or captivity was necessary for the firm establishment of the Spanish power in the Mexican empire; and the mind of Cortes was, therefore, constantly directed towards the king, and he gave the strictest instructions to Sandoval to be careful in his endeavours to intercept his escape. Sandoval kept a vigilant eye on the canoes that were cruizing about the lake, and observing some large piraguas, making with their utmost speed towards land, he immediately gave the signal for pursuit. Garcia Holguin, who commanded the swiftest vessel, soon fell in with several piraguas, one of which, from its superior appearance, he concluded to be that of Guatimozin. He immediately prepared to fire, when the unfortunate king desisted from his intention of escaping, and declared his readiness to submit. Holguin received him, his queen, and attendants, into his vessel, with great marks of respect, to which Guatimozin answered with a dignified composure, requesting that he might be immediately conducted to the Spanish general. The conduct of the last king of Mexico was, throughout, deserving of the highest admiration. He defended his empire with a resolution, perseverance, and skill, which would have done honour to a more civilized ruler; and when fate decreed his fall, he assumed a deportment which rendered him great even in misfortune. He neither evinced the sullen ferocity of a barbarian, nor the sunken spirit, and downcast looks of a vanquished man, but, erect and tranquil, though in deepest affliction, he appeared before Cortes. He could not, however, refrain from tears, when he exclaimed, "*Malinatzin*, I have done all in my power to defend my

kingdom and my people. All my efforts have been fruitless; I have nothing else to attempt—take your dagger and stab me to the heart." * Cortes endeavoured to console him under his affliction, and issued strict instructions, that he and all his family should be treated with profound respect; and that all the Mexicans should experience that kind behaviour from their conquerors, which their gallant defence so well deserved. Cortes further announced to Guatimozin, that he should continue to reign, only acknowledging the jurisdiction of Spain. Guatimozin, at the time of his downfall, was a young man, about twenty-five years of age, of a good appearance. His qualities can best be gathered from his conduct during the war with the Spaniards.

With the capture of the Mexican monarch, all resistance was at an end, and Cortes took possession of the remaining part of the city, on the 13th of August 1521. Thus ended one of the most extraordinary and memorable sieges recorded in history. During the seventy-five days of its duration, not one day passed without respective efforts of attack or defence, and seldom, if ever, have men displayed greater resolution or fortitude; seldom, indeed, were they exposed to more frightful miseries. Historians mention the names of Maria Estrada, Beatriz Bermudez, and several other women, with applause. These were conspicuous in their attacks against Mexico, supporting hardships superior to their sex with uncommon resolution, and fighting by the side of their husbands with singular courage. They were equipped and arm-

* Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Cron.; B. Diaz; Clavigero.

ed like the rest of the soldiers, and rendered services equal to any of the best men of Cortes.*

Nothing can paint more vividly the obstinate and firm resistance of the Mexicans, than the state of the capital when the Spaniards finally became masters of it. Three-fourths of that once beautiful city were laid in ruins, and all the streets, squares, and courts of Tlalteloco, the theatre of such furious and sanguinary contests, were covered with dead bodies. It was impossible to move a step without stumbling upon one or more of these bleeding memorials of war. This circumstance had infected the air, for the Mexicans, intent on reaping, had no time to gather in the harvest of death.

It was accordingly determined by Cortes that a temporary evacuation of that ruinous capital should take place, in order to remove the dead, and restore salubrity to the atmosphere. In pursuance of this order, during three days and nights, the causeways were full of sickly, poor, and squalid wretches, men, women, and children, worn out by disease and famine, covered with filth, and offering a most striking evidence of the horrors to which they had been exposed. The picture which B. Diaz de Castillo draws of the appearance of Mexico at this period is truly frightful. "All the streets, squares, and houses," he says, "were covered with the bodies of the slain; among the heaps of which were to be seen many wretches crawling about in an advanced stage of those loathsome diseases, produced by famine or unnatural food, exhaustion, and infected air. The

* Clavigero.

trees had been stript of their bark—the earth dug up in search of food—not a drop of fresh water could be found, and there is no instance of any people suffering so severely from an accumulation of miseries,—hunger, thirst, maladies, and war."* Nor was the situation of the Spaniards during this memorable siege much more desirable. The immense number of allies crowded on one spot, rendered it extremely difficult to procure and distribute provisions; besides, the incessant attacks of the Mexicans, who acted often on the offensive, and continual alarms, obliged the Spaniards to live in a state of constant excitement, without being able to provide for their repose and procure the necessaries of life. They suffered dreadfully from want of proper attention to their wounds, which were often made to bleed afresh before they had been once healed. But perhaps the most fearful of their miseries was the dark image which haunted their imaginations, of being taken alive, and sacrificed to the idols of the enemy.

Hernan Cortes had now achieved the most splendid and beneficial enterprise recorded in the history of the conquest of the New World. His joy and that of his followers was proportionate to the hardships by which such effects had been obtained. But the sentiments of delight and congratulation were soon subdued by the disappointment of those hopes which the conquerors had fondly entertained. Very little booty could be collected amid the heaps of desolation presented by the city which they had subdued. No treasure

* B. Diaz.

could be found, and the whole quantity of gold and silver collected, scarcely amounted to the value of 120,000 dollars;* a sum barely sufficient to defray the expenses incurred in so great an expedition, much less to afford rewards to the conquerors for all their sufferings and exploits. This occasioned much murmur and discontent among the soldiers; they saw their golden dreams dissipated, and when they took a retrospective view of their extraordinary disasters and toil, on finding such a scanty pittance as their remuneration, a great number of them turned from it in contempt. At the instigation of Father Olmedo, the sums allotted to the soldiers were yielded up to the sickly and the disabled among them, the rest consoling themselves for their disappointment by the hopes of future reward.† But this disinterested arrangement did not satisfy the views of many; they began to make the most ungenerous conclusion with regard to their chiefs, even expressing their doubts of the strictness and impartiality of Cortes in the transaction. It was currently believed that Guatimozin, four days previous to his capture, had thrown great quantities of gold and precious stones into the lake, resolving to disappoint the avarice of those men whose courage he had not been able to resist‡. This circumstance gave birth to many innuendoes and surmises, till it was at last plainly stated, that Cortes knew more of the matter than he was willing to confess. Some proposed to subject Guatimozin and his favourite, the lord of Tacuba, to the torture, in order to extort from them

* Cortes, Relat. † B. Diaz. ‡ Ibid.

a confession of the place where the treasure was concealed. Such a horrid proposal was rejected by Cortes with scorn, and this disinclination to the act was interpreted as the most convincing argument of his want of integrity. They did not scruple to cry out that the general was averse to the expedient, not from any feeling of its inhumanity, but merely because he wished the concealment of the treasure to remain a secret from the soldiers, that he alone might profit by it. Such ungenerous declarations, together with the growing discontent of these mercenaries, who began to assume an attitude of revolt, created considerable apprehension in the mind of Cortes: and partly to silence reports so discreditable to his honour—partly to prevent any disastrous effects which might result from the discontent of the soldiers, he yielded to them in that which has thrown a dark spot on the wide splendour of his glory. Guatimozin and his favourite were put to the torture. The unfortunate king bore this inhuman sentence with that high spirit and unshaken fortitude which had marked his previous conduct. The treasure, if such a thing really existed, which is doubtful, remained undiscovered; and Cortes, ashamed of the unworthy fate to which he had subjected the unfortunate and noble Guatimozin, caused him to be snatched from his tormentors. His life, however, was only prolonged three years, when, on suspicion of a premeditated revolt founded on the declaration of a Mexican, he was condemned to be hanged, and underwent his sentence.

The loss of human lives sustained by the siege of Mexico was very great, though accounts are

extremely various, and often exaggerated. Of nine hundred Spaniards, more than one hundred were slain or sacrificed. The Indian allies sustained a loss of several thousands; but the slaughter of the Mexicans might amount to a hundred thousand.* To these must be added, fifty thousand more who perished by famine, or the pollution of the atmosphere.†

Cortes now considered the conquest of the Mexican empire accomplished. He knew that the principal forces of the territory had been drawn to the defence of the capital, and that the reduction of the provinces would be comparatively an easy task. Without a king, and after the dreadful fate of Mexico, even the more warlike tribes could not be supposed to offer any dangerous opposition to the victorious career of the Spaniards. The siege and downfall of the capital must therefore be considered as the grand and decisive feature in the conquest of this part of the New World. The valour, magnanimity, and perseverance displayed by the Spaniards during the siege, were highly creditable to these veterans, and meet with few parallels in military history. Yet, despite of their enthusiastic ardour and unabated fortitude, it appears problematical, that nine hundred men, however well disciplined and well armed, could have achieved so gigantic an enterprise without the aid and assistance of the Tlascalans, and other Indian allies. The jealousies and disunion which prevailed in New Spain, or Anahuac, at the time of the invasion of Cortes, tended considerably to further

* Clavigero. † Cortes, Relat.

the plans of that commander. "But," says Dr Robertson, "this adds to the merit and abilities of Cortes, who, under every disadvantage, acquired such an ascendant over unknown nations, as to render them instruments towards carrying his schemes into execution."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Proceedings after the Conquest of Mexico.

SHORTLY after the reduction of the Mexican capital, Cortes resolved to send his principal captains to subject the new province, and establish settlements. This conduct was prudent in a high degree; for, at the same time that it extended the conquest, it seemed to keep the attention of the Spaniards occupied, and make them forget the disappointment of their hopes on the conquest of Mexico. Sandoval, Olid, Orozco, and others, were accordingly sent in different directions, all inspired by the same ardour after discovery and conquest —all eager for the acquisition of that wealth which their late hardships and exploits had not been able to procure.

Whilst Cortes and his gallant captains were thus enlarging the dominions of the Spanish crown, and adding splendid victories to the blaze of military glory that illumined the reign of Charles V., this monarch, influenced by the cabals of the Bishop of Burgos, and the misrepresentation of the enemies of Cortes, was persuaded to divest the conqueror of power and command. Christoval de Tapia accordingly arrived at Vera Cruz shortly after the reduction of Mexico, with a commis-

sion to seize Cortes, and treat him like an accused and guilty person. Alvarado, who commanded at Villa Rica, affected to receive Tapia with profound respect, as behoved an individual who came empowered with a royal mandate, but immediately dispatched a messenger to Cortes, informing him of the new danger that threatened his authority. The Spanish general gave order to some of his adherents to go and meet Tapia, who was advancing to Mexico, and establish a negotiation. Alvarado, Sandoval, and Father Olmedo, succeeded in inducing Tapia to return to Chempoalla, and there produce his commission to them, that it might be examined.* The friends of Cortes then treated the new governor with marked respect; but Tapia soon perceived that he would never enter into the exercise of his power. He found himself in the trammels of men more sagacious, and more acquainted with the secrets of intrigue, than himself; and after a time lost in tedious negotiation, he did not see his business the least advanced. By the advice of his agents, Cortes was next induced to try the power of gold on Tapia, an expedient which fully answered the desired effect; for that weak man, tired and disgusted with dilatory and hopeless discussion, his avarice being satisfied, easily relinquished the gratification of more noble passions.†

This storm being so fortunately evaded, Cortes enjoyed a short relaxation from the fatigues of his toilsome life, and devoted his time to repairing

* B. Diaz.

† Cortes, Relat.; B. Diaz; Herrera, Dec.

and embellishing the great city which he had conquered. Under his instructions, the ground was artificially marked out for the erection of churches, convents, public buildings, with squares, markets, and every convenience suitable to the capital of a vast empire. He then took his residence in a magnificent palace, which he had caused to be constructed for the purpose. About the same time, a reconciliation took place between him and Narvaez, whom he had ordered to be sent from Villa Rica. Cortes behaved with manly generosity to his ancient rival, preventing him from kissing his hand, and bestowing a most cordial embrace. But Narvaez, at the instigation of the implacable Bishop of Burgos, made a very ungrateful return to the kindness of Cortes.

The repose of the conqueror of Mexico was of short duration. Whilst employed in the embellishment of the capital, he received intelligence that the natives of Panuco had risen in arms, and slaughtered several of the Spaniards who had gone to settle colonies in the province. Cortes, without loss of time, marched against the Panuchese, routed them in two battles, and compelled them to submit, after which he returned to Mexico. But neither the splendour nor the number of his services to his country were sufficient to remove from his mind that constant anxiety, which the inveterate enmity and clandestine machinations of his enemies had created. He resolved, therefore, to send another deputation to Spain, with glowing descriptions of the extent and importance of his conquests. He intrusted this commission to Alonzo Davila and Quiñones, two of his distinguished officers, with full instructions regarding

the conduct they were to observe. He sent by them a splendid present of gold and jewels to his sovereign, together with a representation from the municipal body of Mexico, as well as from its conquerors, praying his majesty that due attention and regard should be paid to them, and that the chief command of New Spain should be invested in the person of their general. On his side, Cortes sent long and detailed dispatches, in which he made use of every argument to advance his interests and those of his faithful and veteran followers.* The messengers were very unfortunate in their voyage, Quiñones being killed in a duel at Terceira, and Davila taken by Florin, a French privateer, and carried prisoner to France. From this circumstance, however, Davila was enabled to establish a correspondence with Don Martin Cortes, father of the conqueror, and his friends.

An arduous struggle now took place in the Spanish court between the adherents and the enemies of Cortes. Every subterfuge which malice could invent was employed to depict as an usurper and a traitor, the man who, by an extraordinary exertion of courage, abilities, and perseverance, had brought to a fortunate termination an enterprise, deemed by some chimerical, and by all as surrounded with frightful dangers and difficulties. Pamphilo de Narvaez, and Christoval de Tapia, having arrived in Spain, accompanied by the pilot Umbria and Cordenas, whom Cortes had punished on the occasion of their revolt, the Bishop of Burgos soon persuaded them all to prefer the most serious accusations against the conqueror of

* B. Diaz.

Mexico. But, on the other hand, the cause of Cortes was strenuously supported by his father, Don Martin, and Francisco de Mortejo and Diego de Ordaz, two of his officers. These individuals had succeeded in obtaining the support of several powerful grandees, and more especially of the Duke of Bejar;*—for these noblemen could not see, without indignation, the intrigues carried on to defraud a great general and successful conqueror of the hard-earned fruits of his labours. The charges brought against Cortes did not appear of a nature to draw punishment on the supposed offender. Partial severity had been indispensable to the success of the expedition; and whatever irregularity had been incurred in the undertaking itself, was more than compensated by the splendour of success. Indeed it would have been the height of impolicy as well as injustice to have inflicted censure and punishment on a man, whose exploits were at the very time the theme of universal applause and admiration. The public voice declared unanimously and warmly in favour of Cortes; his pretensions were officially seconded by powerful personages, and Charles could not refuse his sanction to wishes so generally expressed. Cortes was accordingly named Captain-General and Governor of New Spain; and certainly no individual was more competent to fill this station than the man whom both the conquering Spaniards and the vanquished Indians were accustomed to love, respect, and fear.†

Cortes now resumed with greater vigour and

* B. Diaz.

† Cortes, Relat.; Gomara, Cron.

spirit his vast schemes both of conquest and settlement. His ardent mind enjoyed no respite from exertion. On the one hand, he was assiduously carrying on the works at Mexico, whilst on the other, his officers were sent to distant provinces to colonize and discover mines. The devotion of his men seconded his views powerfully; and it is scarcely to be doubted, that had his ambition been equal to his ability, he might have become absolute master over those territories which he now governed asthe deputy of another. But his fidelity to his king and country was proof against the whispers of revolt; and the pride of having given to the land of his birth so vast an empire, appeared to him paramount to the most boundless sway and ambition. About this time, Francisco Garay, governor of Jamaica, set sail with a great armament for the reduction of Panuco; but hearing at Cuba that the province had already been subjected by Cortes, and being also informed of the great exploits of that commander, he commissioned the licentiate Quazo to negotiate with Cortes, that he would permit him to assume the government of Panuco in virtue of the commission he had from the Bishop of Burgos. He then pursued his voyage; but being driven by the weather into the river Palmas, he resolved to disembark and continue his march to Panuco by land. Upon his arrival at the place, he found it almost deserted; his soldiers began to disperse and commit depredations about the country—others resolved to join the followers of Cortes, and Garay, with little disappointment, beheld all his prospects of conquest vanish. Vallejo, in command of the settlement of San Estevan, had sent instructions to Cortes of the arrival of this arma-

ment; and Alvarado, Sandoval, Father Olmedo, and Ocampo, were sent to notify to Garay to quit the country. The Governor of Jamaica next attempted a negotiation, requesting Cortes to aid him in order to compel the soldiers who had deserted to return to their duty. After some altercation, the matter was amicably adjusted at the suggestion of Father Olmedo, a marriage having been concluded between Doña Catalina, the daughter of Cortes, and Garay's eldest son.*

The expedition of Garay, however, gave rise to serious results. His soldiers, totally unacquainted with the discipline which characterized the veterans of Cortes, becoming restless and discontented, began to disperse about the country in small bodies, pillaging the natives, and committing all sort of excesses. This exasperated the Panuchese to such a degree, that they concerted plots to exterminate the Spaniards. Their schemes succeeded so effectually, that in a short time they killed, sacrificed, and devoured, five hundred of the soldiers of Garay, according to the accounts of B. Diaz. But the Indians, not satisfied with inflicting such severe punishment on the offenders, and emboldened by success, now determined to carry their hatred further; and whenever they met with straggling Spaniards, totally innocent of their countrymen's offence, they made no difficulty in sacrificing them to their fury. They went further, for they rose in arms, and resolved to destroy the colony of San Estevan, with the inhabitants of which they had lived in peace. Vallejo, and several of the original companions of Cortes, were

* B. Diaz.

slain in battle, and no less than forty Spaniards were killed and burnt in one night. This dangerous revolt, and the shocking excesses with which it was accompanied, filled the mind of Cortes with anxiety, and induced him to adopt the most efficient measures to arrest the progress of the evil. He immediately deputed Sandoval, with a competent force, to march against the rebels. That gallant officer, upon his arrival at San Estevan, found the miserable remains of the colony in the most deplorable condition, and ready to sink under the pressure of the dangers that surrounded them. Sandoval, with his usual bravery, activity, and success, soon reduced the province to subjection, and having taken prisoners the caziques and Indians guilty of the murders of the Spaniards, sent to Cortes for further instructions. The governor of New Spain commissioned the magistrate, Diego de Ocampo, to take cognizance of the affair, and inflict punishment on the guilty; but to proceed with all possible care in conciliating the natives, and checking the outrages of the soldiers of Garay. These measures were soon carried into execution. Many caziques, being found guilty by clear evidence, or their own confession, were publicly executed—some being burnt and others hanged. A considerable number received a free pardon, while the soldiers of Garay were collected and shipped back for Cuba.*

We have been induced to be more particular in the detail of this event on account of the want of impartiality in Dr Robertson, who depicts the affair as a most atrocious instance of barbarity.† It is

* B. Diaz.

† "In the country of Panuco," says Robertson, "sixty

not creditable in so grave and circumspect an historian to mention *effects* without also specifying the *causes* by which they were produced; and while he sympathises with the fate of the Panuchese, certainly he ought not to have forgotten their revolts and cruelties towards the Spaniards of San Estevan. "The inhabitants of this province (Panuco) were," to use the very words of B. Diaz, "the most barbarous in New Spain; they were cruel to excess, shockingly addicted to the sacrifice of human victims, given to all manner of degradation in drink, filthy and wicked beyond measure; their revolts were frequent, and their punishment exemplary, but nothing could reduce them to good government." Such were the people whom the British historian represents as injured victims of wanton cruelty. The accusation of Sandoval is more unjustifiable, and made with excessive levity. Sandoval was entirely innocent of any part of the transaction, further than reducing nobly, and by arms, as he was instructed by his chief, a revolted province. The punishment of the caziques was decreed by Ocampo, in virtue of his judicial functions.

This digression is required for the sake of justice and impartiality; and we trust will put readers on their guard concerning the exaggeration of cruelty which some historians have been lightly induced to make in their accounts of the conquest of America.

caziques or leaders, and 400 nobles, were burnt at one time. Nor was this shocking barbarity perpetrated in any sudden sally of rage, or by a commander of inferior note. It was the act of Sandoval, an officer whose name is entitled to the second rank in the annals of the New World, and executed after a solemn consultation with Cortes," &c.

The active mind of Cortes could not enjoy useless repose. By his investigations he learnt that the districts of Higueras and Honduras contained rich mines. Some persons informed him, that the fishermen of the place had weights of gold to their nets, and hinted that a passage might be discovered to the Pacific Ocean. Such reports were not to be disregarded, and Cortes accordingly resolved to send an expedition to these provinces. He fitted out six ships, containing 370 soldiers, and intrusted the command of the armament to Christoval de Olid. This chief was ordered to proceed to the Havannah to procure the necessary supplies for the expedition; then to pursue his voyage to Higueras, where he was to make a settlement in an advantageous situation.* Olid, according to instructions, proceeded to Cuba; but this movement was followed by very fatal results, as his integrity was not proof against the persuasion of Velazquez, and in that island was projected a revolt which was a source of the deepest sorrow and trouble to Cortes, and terminated in the death of its author.†

Whilst Cortes was employing every resource of his genius to enlarge and improve the dominions of Charles in New Spain, it was his fate to be continually surrounded by spies, who gave the most sinister interpretations to all his actions, and lost no opportunity of placing his conduct in the most unfavourable light. When the government of New Spain was invested in its conqueror, certain civilians were sent thither to collect and administer the royal revenue independent of the

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

jurisdiction of Cortes. Those narrow-minded persons, incapable themselves of great actions or generous thoughts, and filled with that gnawing envy with which grovelling minds ever regard genius and exalted merit, soon became the censors of Cortes. Adequate only to the drudgery of office, every thing seemed wrong in their eyes which was not confined within the routine of duty. They were astonished at the munificence of the conqueror; levelled their sneers even at the palace which he had built for himself; and felt scandalized at the vast authority which he exercised over Spaniards and Indians, no less than at the respect which they paid him in return. Amongst these individuals, one Rodrigo de Albornoz particularly signalized himself for his enmity to Cortes. He cherished a private pique against the governor, because he had opposed his ambitious views of marrying the daughter of the Prince of Tezcuco; and he now sought to revenge himself, by sending to Spain the most virulent accusations against Cortes, charging him with a variety of offences, such as levying exorbitant contributions, fortifying castles for his own defence, and taking every measure to declare himself a king, independent of his sovereign.* These charges, however destitute of foundation, proved nevertheless powerful engines in the hands of the enemies of Cortes. The Bishop of Burgos and Narvaez sedulously applied themselves to sow the germ of distrust in the bosom of Charles, and they succeeded in their treacherous intentions. At the same time, the Duke of Bejar interposed his influence against their machinations, and the Em-

* B. Diaz.

peror, willing, on the one hand, to preserve a show of justice, and jealous, on the other, of his authority, ordered that a careful and solemn investigation should be made into the conduct of Cortes. To this effect, the licentiate Ponce de Leon was sent (1525) to New Spain, with full powers to seize the governor, if he should deem it necessary, and send him under a strong escort to Spain.*

Such was the treatment reserved for the conqueror of Mexico!

* Herrera, Dec.

CHAPTER XXV.

Expedition of Cortes to Honduras, and Voyage to Spain.

WHILST these intrigues were carried on in Spain, Cortes was distracted by a subject of great moment, in the country over which he governed. Christoval de Olid, one of his best officers, as well as one of the principal conquerors of Mexico, had revolted from his authority, and blushed not to repay with ingratitude the man at whose side he had so often fought, and whose kindness he had so repeatedly shared. Led astray by the evil counsels of traitors, and the insinuations of Velazquez, when he unfortunately touched at Cuba, previous to his expedition for Higueras, the imprudent and rash Olid, upon planting the colony of the *Triumph of the Cross*, declared himself independent of Cortes. The governor was deeply chagrined when intelligence of this revolt was brought to him. It was a fatal precedent, which he could not suffer to remain unpunished, but, at the same time, his heart was deeply wounded that the treason should have been attempted by one of his veteran companions. Cortes, therefore, sent an expedition against him under the command of Francisco Las Casas, and another officer of confidence.

A storm, however, drove the vessels on shore, by which some of the men perished, and the rest were made prisoners by Olid. But Las Casas, when set free, persuaded the soldiers to return to their duty, and seize their rebel chief, which, after some hesitation, they did. Olid was shortly afterwards sentenced to die, and was beheaded at Naco.*

Cortes, not receiving any intelligence from his lieutenants, grew uneasy, and resolved to take the command of an expedition in person. This was prepared on a scale of power, and even luxury, unknown before in the New World. The governor caused himself to be attended by a numerous train of domestics and dependants, besides a competent detachment of Spaniards, headed by Sandoval and Marin, and three thousand Mexican warriors, under the guidance of their own chiefs.† The march of the Spaniards to Coatzacuales resembled more a military procession than a warlike expedition, and his arrival at that place was greeted with fire-works, and other demonstrations of public joy. Here he remained eight days, ordering all the caziques of the surrounding districts to repair to a general meeting. Among these came the brother and mother of Doña Marina, whose looks they scarcely durst meet, on account of their cruel behaviour; but that generous woman, far from thinking to revenge herself on her family, bestowed on them every token of regard, and interceded with Cortes in their behalf. Cortes resumed his march, but soon found himself entangled in hardships to which his followers did not come prepared, and which, in spite of their fortitude,

* B. Diaz. † Ibid.

subjected their endurance to the most severe trial. They had entered a country intersected by numerous rivers, which continually arrested their progress. The soil was heavy, and nothing but gloomy forests met their progress. The labour to which they were subjected was immense; every one, Cortes included, was obliged to work at the construction of the timber bridges, which were thrown over the rivers that continually came before them.

They had now reached a place called Tamaztepec, which was intersected by three rivers, and an arm of the sea. But when they had surmounted these difficulties, the miseries of the Spaniards, instead of terminating, seemed only to accumulate with greater force. They had arrived at so immense a forest, so thick and impervious, that they were actually compelled to cut their way through by extraordinary efforts. A dreary gloom pervaded that seat of desolation. Some of the soldiers climbed up to some of the tallest trees, in expectation of cheering their sight with more gratifying objects, but to their despondency they saw nothing but a long continuation of woody deserts and barren heaths. In a short time they found themselves excluded from the light of day, owing to the thickness of the forests, which they were to clear by a kind of desperate effort. Two of the guides had now abandoned Cortes, and another who remained, was totally unacquainted with this part of the country. The provisions failed, and the soldiers were put on the most scanty allowance, whilst, at the same time, they were compelled to work with unceasing industry. Exhausted with fatigue and hunger, and without guides, seeing

nothing but loathsome reptiles in their way, they at length threw themselves down in despair, in the conviction that their doom was inevitable.*

Never was the greatness of soul of Cortes subjected to a more trying test, or his genius summoned to more extraordinary exertions. He saw his faithful followers, many of whom belonged to the body of his original companions, the conquerors of Mexico, ready to sink under unparalleled calamities, and exposed to the most appalling fate. Even his own stout heart could not repel a secret shudder, which he endeavoured, nevertheless, to smother, in order not to augment the wretchedness of his unfortunate soldiers. On the contrary, assuming a cheerful aspect, he showed them a mariner's compass, which he assured them would serve the purpose of their guides, whilst he animated them to redoubled exertions, by the prospect that a little more perseverance would extricate them from their dilemma. He informed them that the town of Huy-Alcala could not be far distant, and on reaching that place, all their misfortunes and dangers would be at an end. The eloquence of that commander, whom they had been accustomed to cherish and to follow with success, cheered their sinking hearts, and they renewed their toil with stubborn constancy. After some time they arrived at Tamaztepec, where they found some provisions, though the town had been deserted by the inhabitants. The sight of food for some time imparted a ray of joy and hope to their desponding hearts, but on renewing their march to Izquantepec, their hardships again commenced. During the three

* B. Diaz.

days' journey to that place, four Spaniards fell down and died through fatigue, and many of the Mexicans lagged behind, and met the same fate. Some of these Indians, in their craving hunger, seized some of the natives of the land clandestinely, and actually devoured them. This being made known to Cortes, he severely reprimanded them for this atrocious act, and ordered one of the most guilty to be punished with death, as an example to the rest. To increase the dreary condition of the Spaniards, they generally found the little hamlets deserted at their approach, and found little sympathy in the inhabitants. But the fortitude of Cortes was never worn out, nor the resources of his mind exhausted. He thus continued to uphold the sinking spirits of his followers, when he was informed, to his great joy, that the district of Huy-Alcala was now only three days' march from him.

As his followers, however, could scarcely proceed through fatigue and hunger, he sent B. Diaz del Castillo with a troop in advance to procure provisions. Diaz proceeded to the discharge of his commission, and, after much difficulty, arrived at the district of Huy-Alcala, where he began to collect a supply. Whilst thus engaged, two Spaniards came up to him in the most deplorable state, with strict orders from Cortes to hasten to him with whatever provisions he could collect, as the army was reduced to the last stage of starvation, and driven to despair. The soldiers were now compelled to feed on wild filberts and roots, or whatever came into their hands. B. Diaz, accordingly, hastened back with a considerable quantity of corn, honey, fruit, and fowls. Meantime Cortes

was consoling his followers with the prospect of a supply, and the men awaited the event in a kind of stupor. But no sooner was the approach of B. Diaz made known, than they all rushed forward, and seizing on the provisions in the utmost disorder and confusion, began to devour them in their raw state, without heeding the cries of the officers, who endeavoured to reserve some for their general.* In this disastrous march, which occupied nearly two years and a half, the Spaniards suffered more from fatigue, hunger, and thirst, than in any other period of the conquest of Mexico. Never did Cortes display a more striking example of fortitude and magnanimity; but even he, after the dangers were passed, confessed that he had considered their doom arrived, though his duty sternly obliged him to assume a deportment in little accordance with his real sensations. A considerable number of Spaniards, and a still greater one of Indians, perished in this dreary march. Some died through exhaustion, some through starvation, others were lost, and not a few were cut off by the natives, as they patrolled in small parties in search of provisions, or to make discoveries. Though this expedition was fruitless, its object, as has already been related, having been accomplished by Las Casas, yet as it tended to exhibit the heroic qualities of Cortes in a striking point of view, an account of it could not be omitted in a life of that great commander.

Meantime Ponce de Leon died shortly after his arrival in New Spain, and his mission remained accordingly unfulfilled. Yet Cortes could not reflect without sorrow and indignation on the ingrati-

* B. Diaz.

tude of that country, for the glory and advantage of which he was undergoing such unceasing and uncommon hardships. He, however, though disgusted with the intrigues of his enemies, no less than the easy facility of his sovereign, continued to maintain his post, and endeavoured to gain the confidence of the Spanish minister by every means in his power, though his efforts were not attended with the desired success. Every officer of the crown who arrived from Spain after the reduction of Mexico, was a spy on, rather than a friend to, its conqueror; and with every fresh arrival from that empire, new complaints and misrepresentations arrived relating to the governor. The spirit of intrigue enjoyed no minute of repose, but seemed resolved to crush that man whose greatness was an offence against the ordinary meanness of human nature. The distrust of the Emperor Charles was at last effectually awakened, and he issued out another commission (1528) to investigate the conduct of Cortes, and to subject him to all the rigour of justice. The feelings of this conqueror of Mexico were powerfully excited at the unmanly triumph of his enemies. He felt all that bitterness of soul which a proud spirit, conscious of great services, receiving wrong from unworthy beings, can alone experience.

It is painful to behold the mighty conqueror in the theatre of his exploits, the victim of the ingratitude of those wretches, who came to fatten on the land which he had gained to his country. But there were many who sympathised in his wrongs, and revolted from this accumulation of ingratitude. His devoted and brave followers, those gallant veterans, who had shared all his dan-

gers and his glory, now rallied round their commander, and proposed that he should seize that independent power which his enemies falsely accused him of aiming at, for they would zealously support his claims, and die in defence of his cause.* But Cortes had the greatness of soul, or the weakness, to reject this advice. His chivalrous spirit shrunk from any violation of loyalty; for he neither wanted the courage, nor the means, to carry into effect a scheme much easier to accomplish than the previous exploits which had marked his career. But he disdained to take revenge on his country, or to crush the paltry enemies by whom he was surrounded. On the other hand, there was something too humiliating to his proud spirit in the idea of being subjected to a trial in that country where he had been accustomed to triumph and be obeyed. He accordingly determined boldly to present himself at the court of his sovereign, and enter into a vindication of his conduct.†

Cortes repaired to his country with a state suitable to his rank, and becoming his great achievements. He was attended by his gallant officers, and the Mexicans of highest distinction, and carried with him a considerable part of his riches, to give splendour to his person. His voyage was effected without disaster; but on his arrival in Spain he was visited by a calamity of a domestic nature, which excited much sorrow in his heart. Such was the death of Gonzalo de Sandoval, who expired in the flower of his age in Andalusia, as he was accompanying his chief to the Spanish

* B. Diaz.

† B. Diaz; Gomara, Cron.; Herrera, Dec.

court. Cortes was sensibly affected by the loss, as Sandoval, besides his distinguished services in the conquest of Mexico, was, of all his officers, the most devotedly attached to him, and the most zealous in the support of his claims. His glorious career was never stained by any of those acts of injustice, cruelty, or avarice, which, at some period or other, unfortunately clouded the glory of the other conquerors. Sandoval was scarcely twenty-nine when he died; and it is probable, that the severe services which he had endured, he having been the leader invariably selected by Cortes for the most difficult enterprises, no less than the numberless wounds which he had received, occasioned his premature death.

Cortes and his companions were received by the Emperor with striking evidence of friendship and cordiality. His fears being removed by the arrival of the conqueror in his native land, Charles resolved now to efface his former ingratitude by a display of generosity and regard. Every possible mark of distinction was bestowed upon Cortes. His exploits were loudly applauded, and his arrival in Spain was a subject of public congratulation. The sovereign conferred on him the Order of Santiago, as well as the title of Marquess of the Valle de Oaxaca, and he admitted him to that friendly intercourse which was only enjoyed by the first grandees of the land.* But this splendour of external show could not dazzle or deceive the searching eye of Cortes. Whilst empty titles, and vain honours were lavished on his person, he perceived that the venom of distrust still circulated

* Herrera, Dec.

in the councils of the court; and that whatever he might gain in outward pomp, the acquisition was only made at the expense of real power. He soon found it was the principal object of the Emperor to reduce this to the lowest ebb compatible with common decency. Cortes groaned inwardly, but endeavoured in vain to change the ideas of his sovereign. Charles perceived the danger of intrusting unlimited command to a man whose genius was equal to his intrepidity, and the admiration which he had excited in accordance with his merit; and with the subtle policy of a courtier, he thought that nothing could more effectually daunt the vigour of Cortes than the empty glitter of courtly distinction, and nothing subdue his spirits and bedim his genius more successfully than idle dissipation. Such was the system then pursued in Spain to cripple the power of its grandees.

But Cortes was not the dupe of such artifices. He disdained a life of ignoble repose, so contrary to the ardour of his spirit; and he continued his expostulations at court, that he might be reinstated in his former station as Captain-General of New Spain. The emperor, however, remained fixed in his determination. Neither the generous conduct, nor the assurances of the supporters of Cortes, could remove his jealous fears; and, indeed, these might be partly justified, by the great merit of the conqueror, no less than the popularity which he enjoyed among the soldiers. Accordingly, after two years of unsuccessful application at court, Cortes despaired of again obtaining that dignified power to which he was justly entitled by his services. The military command was alone reserved for him, with the power of attempting

new expeditions and discoveries; but the supreme government was invested in a board of civil functionaries, under the title of "*Audience of New Spain;*" a form of government which was, however, superseded in the sequel by the establishment of Viceroys.

In 1530, Cortes returned to the theatre of his glory, with sentiments of regret and disappointment. Honours and distinctions had been conferred upon him, but he had a strength and clearness of mind not to be imposed upon by the glitter which reduced his authority. Besides, he knew that this division of power in New Spain would prove a source of endless dissension and debate. No sincere union of sentiments could be expected from the servile and selfish civilians imported from court, and the veteran conquerors who had gained the empire. The petty jealousies, and despicable vanities, of the *Audiencia*, were, accordingly, always vigilant guards on the most indifferent actions of Cortes; and in their apprehension that the general would trespass the limits of his jurisdiction, they meddled themselves in affairs over which they had no power, and took every opportunity of thwarting the wishes of the man whom they at once envied and feared.

* La Audiencia de Neuva España.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Second Voyage of Cortes to Spain, his Death, and Merits, &c. &c.

The life of Cortes being embittered by this ungrateful curtailment of his authority, he now directed the whole powers of his mind towards that quarter which had not yet been invaded by the influence of jealousy or distrust. Cortes felt shame in his present indefinable situation. His jurisdiction over the affairs of the New World amounted to nothing, for he could ill combat the opposition of the *Audiencia*, supported as that body was by the emperor and his ministry. Cortes, in this galling predicament, turned, with a fond eye, towards the pursuits of his previous life, and he resolved, by the splendour of new discoveries and exploits, to confound his enemies and augment the approbation of his friends. He accordingly conceived various schemes, in unison with his bold and enterprising genius. His first ideas prompting him to attempt a discovery of some passage along the eastern coast of North America falling into the Western Ocean, and believing that a similar discovery might be made of a strait between the North and South Seas, by exploring the

Isthmus of Panama.* These two schemes he resolved to carry into execution, and for this purpose he fitted out expeditions, which he intrusted to able commanders and experienced pilots. But the results did not answer his sanguine expectations, and he determined to circumscribe his ambitious views within more narrow limits.

The progress of colonization had been rapid in New Spain. Settlers had arrived in great numbers from the mother-land to that country of promise, where penury was to be exchanged for ease and independence. Several ports were already established on the coast; and from these Cortes sent out different small armaments with the object of discovery in the South Sea; but these expeditions were not more fortunate than his previous and more important attempts in the eastern coast of North America and the islands of Panama. Mortified at the failure of so many enterprises, and supposing that this want of success ought, in a great degree, to be attributed to the inefficiency of the men to whom they had been intrusted, he determined to conduct another undertaking in person. To this effect he prepared an expedition of higher importance, and assumed the command of it in the year 1536.

In this new enterprise, the fortitude and abilities of Cortes were again called into active play. He cruized for some time without any material event, excepting his continual exposure to hardship and dangers. But his mind and frame, inured to toil and suffering, bore every fresh labour with tranquil forbearance, and the perseverance of

* Cortes, Relat.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Second Voyage of Cortes to Spain, his Death, and Merits, &c. &c.

THE life of Cortes being embittered by this ungrateful curtailment of his authority, he now directed the whole powers of his mind towards that quarter which had not yet been invaded by the influence of jealousy or distrust. Cortes felt shame in his present indefinable situation. His jurisdiction over the affairs of the New World amounted to nothing, for he could ill combat the opposition of the *Audiencia*, supported as that body was by the emperor and his ministry. Cortes, in this galling predicament, turned, with a fond eye, towards the pursuits of his previous life, and he resolved, by the splendour of new discoveries and exploits, to confound his enemies and augment the approbation of his friends. He accordingly conceived various schemes, in unison with his bold and enterprising genius. His first ideas prompting him to attempt a discovery of some passage along the eastern coast of North America falling into the Western Ocean, and believing that a similar discovery might be made of a strait between the North and South Seas, by exploring the

which had distinguished his former voyage, but as a man whose destiny seemed to have been changed. Though Cortes did not entertain any sanguine expectations concerning the reception he should meet with from his sovereign, yet he was far from surmising that his services should have been so soon forgotten and so ill repaid. The appearance of the conqueror of Mexico at court produced no sensation either of pleasure or disapprobation. He was received in the manner which is most galling to a proud spirit, conscious of high desert and important services. The behaviour of Charles towards his illustrious subject, was one which ought to be reprobated, not merely by justice, but common decency. A cold reserve—a stiff civility, which would scarcely have been generous when addressed to a chief of indifferent merit and no pretensions, was the attitude which the sovereign of Spain assumed towards the great man who had added the brightest jewel to his immense dominions.

But if the conduct of Charles was ungrateful and unmanly, that of his ministers deserved the execration of every upright mind. It will scarcely be credited that Cortes was treated not only with indifference and neglect, but with actual scorn, by the members of the Spanish cabinet. Yet this deportment of the court was perfectly consistent and natural. According to the doctrine of these selfish counsellors, no consideration was due to the man from whom no service of moment could now be expected. The blaze of glory which encircled the person of Cortes had been obscured by the brightness of more recent achievements. The discoveries and conquests of the Spaniards in South

America—the reduction of Peru by the Pizarros and Almagro—had procured to Spain a source of immense wealth; and the attempts which new administrations were continually making had created the most extravagant ideas in the hearts of the Spaniards. The exploits of Cortes and his companions, therefore, were now regarded with indifference; the empire which he had conquered was firmly attached and subjected to the Spanish crown; the time was past when Cortes came arrayed in the shape of a formidable candidate for power and dominion; time had effaced the brilliancy of his achievements when it had also begun to impair his vigour and his frame. Charles had now little to expect from a man entering into the vale of years, and who had lost the lustre of his former greatness. Nor was his indignation and revenge a fit subject for apprehension. Charles and his ministry had no consideration to keep up with Cortes, either from expectation of interest or from motives of fear. Neglect and indifference was therefore the boon which they bestowed on the great chief.

Seven tedious years did Cortes spend in unprofitable applications for justice and redress. His sacred claims were received without attention, and the recital of his services was heard without sensation. Day after day, and month after month, he applied to those important personages who held power over the affairs of America; but neither from them, nor from the most impartial and urgent representations to the Emperor, could Cortes obtain the sanction to his demand. He was doomed never more to govern in Mexico. Other persons, whose chief merit rested perhaps in sycophancy,

were to reap the fruits of his labours and his genius. The chill of age had begun to damp the ardour of early life, which would have enabled him to support their ingratitude with more contempt and indifference. In the activity of youth, and in the freshness of genius, he would have found solace from the coldness of a court; but it is the curse of human nature to be invaded by disappointment and neglect when it is in the weakest state to repel their attacks. Cortes, to the pangs of fruitless exertions, had to add the conviction of his humiliated situation, and his inability to inflict vengeance on his enemies and ungenerous countrymen. His constitution was broken down by the innumerable and extraordinary hardships which he had sustained; and in the decline of life, when he ought to have been quietly enjoying the reward of his services, it was melancholy to behold the conqueror of Mexico dancing attendance about courts and saloons of audience, lost amid a crowd of inferior spirits.*

Such a destiny could not but sensibly affect the proud and noble heart of Cortes. The stings of ingratitude, regret, and disappointed hope, preyed upon him, which, added to the infirmities of an over-exerted constitution, brought to a termination the mortal career of this extraordinary man.

* It has been recorded of Hernan Cortes, that about this period, upon his appearing one day at Court, he pressed somewhat rudely through the tinsel crowd to approach the Emperor, who, observing his contempt for ceremony, and not choosing to recognise him, exclaimed aloud, "Who is that person?"—"Tell his Majesty," said Cortes, "it is one who has conquered for him more kingdoms than his ancestors left him provinces."

He died on the 2d day of December, in the year 1547, and in the sixty-second of his age. Cortes was twice married: first, at Cuba, to Doña Catalina Suarez, who ended her days shortly after the reduction of Mexico; and afterwards to Doña Geronima Ramirez de Arellano, daughter of the Count of Aguilar, and nearly related to the Duke of Bejar. By this lady he had Don Martin Cortes Ramirez de Arellano, who inherited his title, and from whom the present Marquis of the Valle de Oaxacar descends, though the male line terminated in his second grandson, the fourth marquis of that title. This badge of distinction was afterwards united to that of Duke of Terranova, the title of Gonzalo de Cordova, surnamed the Great Captain; and thus the present illustrious possessor unites the honours of two of the greatest names in arms that Spain, or indeed any other country, has produced.

Cortes had other children, of whom the most noted, from his misfortunes, was Don Martin Cortes, a knight of the order of Santiago, who was born to him by his mistress, the celebrated Doña Marina, and seemed to inherit a great portion of his illustrious sire's spirit and abilities. In 1568, on a very slight and even unfounded suspicion of rebellion, he was put to the torture in Mexico, his barbarous judges totally forgetting the unparalleled services which his parents had rendered to Spain.* Cortes survived almost all his principal companions in arms, of whom very few, if any, enjoyed peaceably the reward of their bravery and troubles. Velazquez de Leon, Morla, and Escalante, perished before the reduction of Mexico,

B. Diaz.

as has already been narrated. Christoval de Olid fell a victim to ill advice, and his own treason; Gonzalo de Sandoval died in Spain, as he accompanied Cortes in his first visit; and Pedro de Alvarado received a violent death in New Galicia, his horse having plunged with him over a precipice.

The merits of Cortes as a general will be best estimated by a careful examination of his actions. The resources of his mind, in cases of emergency, were as bold, as they were true emanations of genius. His whole life is gilded by deeds so singular and splendid, as to invest the narration of them with the interesting character of chivalrous romance. The destruction of his fleet at Vera Cruz to compel his followers to conquer or die—his fearless entry into Mexico—the still bolder seizure of Montezuma, in the midst of the capital—his defeat of Narvaez—his exploit at the battle of Otompan—and his magnanimity in the siege of Mexico, present a series of events as striking as they are unparalleled. Few great military names have joined more wisdom in counsels, more prudence in preparatory arrangements, than Cortes. Indeed his abilities as a negotiator were as great as his intrepidity and perseverance. He possessed a singular tact in discerning the weak features of human character, and turning them to his advantage. In this, his winning manners and natural eloquence most effectually assisted him. He was, besides, conspicuous for a cultivation of mind, somewhat singular in the adventurous conquerors of America. His sojourn at the university had not been totally lost; and his letters to the Emperor Charles V. evince much taste in composition.

In the conqueror of Mexico, a strong resem-

blance may be traced to Julius Cæsar. We find in the Spaniard the same daring intrepidity, and the same prudence, that rendered the Roman celebrated. The art of winning the affections of their soldiers, and their fertility of mind under difficulties, were the same in both generals. Eloquence and refinement they possessed in common; nay, a similarity may even be found in their love for the sex, their mercurial dispositions, and their gallant bearing.

The character of Cortes, as a private individual, was amiable, and in general praiseworthy. His heart was generous and noble—his manners conciliating, and his attachments sincere. The imputation of personal cruelty in his case is unfounded. Whatever blood was shed in New Spain, was required by imperious necessity, or was authorized by just retaliation. Some of the acts of Cortes bear no doubt the impress of terrible severity; but let it be remembered, that he had to contend with an enemy ferocious, warlike, and implacable. The fate of Guatimozin is the most unjustifiable of his deeds; but this, together with other isolated measures of cruelty and even injustice, ought not to determine the intrinsic merit or demerit of a great man, especially when the history of all conquerors, both ancient and modern, offers instances of the like nature.

At all events, the name of Hernan Cortes will ever stand first among the distinguished names in the conquest of the New World. His abilities, intrepidity, and magnanimity, as well as his conciliating manner toward the natives, and his uniform kindness when unprovoked, no less than the splendid and extraordinary deeds which marked the re-

duction of Mexico, confer upon its conqueror this just distinction. Yet what was the recompense which Cortes received from his king and country for all his merit, and all his services? The answer is ready, and a mournful one. Cortes was treated with the same ingratitude by Charles, that Columbus and the Great Captain experienced from the Emperor's predecessor Ferdinand the Catholic; and the same which every great man will probably receive from his employers, when his genius and power present a phantom of fear to their jealousy, and his great services become a tax on their gratitude and respect.

THE END.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE & COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK, CANONGATE.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

CANCELLED

5547 3

DEC 23 '76 HI

1976